



Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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Part of The Billericay & Little Burstead Team Ministry



HG159 Moses: The Prince Of Egypt Release Of The Captives (The Exodus)

Exodus 11; 12 & 13:1-16

Home Group Study Notes

25 February 2018 - Revd Paul A. Carr



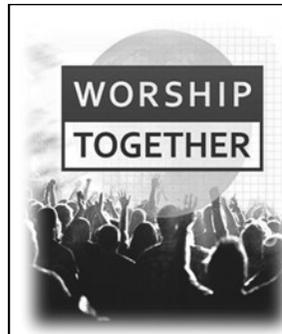
**PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!**

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.



Welcome (10 mins) Ice Breaker

What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?



Looking Upwards (10 mins) Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



HG159 Moses: *The Prince Of Egypt* Release Of The Captives

Exodus 11; 12 & 13:1-16

Home Group Sermon

25 February 2018 - Revd Paul A. Carr

1. The Plagues of Egypt!

A lot has taken place since we left Moses in chapter 6, asking Pharaoh to *'Let My People Go'* and where we pick it up today. God has been dealing with Pharaoh, and the people of Egypt, and a series of nine plagues has failed to weaken Rameses' resistance and this has left his nation in ruins, both physically and religiously. So, what were the nine plagues? 1) *Blood* (7:14-25); 2) *Frogs* (8:1-15); 3) *Gnats* (8:16-19); 4) *Flies* (8:20-32); 5) *Livestock* (9:1-7); 6) *Boils* (9:8-12); 7) *Hail* (9:13-35); 8) *Locusts* (10:1-20); 9) *Darkness* (10:21-29).

All of the plagues were a judgment on the gods of Egypt - they had gods for everything: water, land, air, fertility, sun ... such as Osiris, Nu, Hapi, Geb, Hathor, Horus, Isis, Apis, Anubis, and the biggest god of them all, Amon Re. *"I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt; I am the Lord"* (12:12). The plagues proved conclusively that the 'gods' of Egypt were non-existent whilst the God of Israel was all-powerful. As the plagues progress, Pharaoh's heart becomes increasingly hardened, he grants more and more concessions, but fails to keep his promises which brings us to the tenth and final plague: the firstborn.

2. The Tenth Plague: **Firstborn** (11:1-10)

In 11:1-3, we are informed of a revelation God had given Moses sometime before, in which the details of the final plague had been outlined. In 11:4-8, Moses declared this revelation to Pharaoh, as it related to him. The text informs us that this plague was sent without regard to social or economic status. While every Egyptian home suffered loss all of the Israelites were spared. *"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn - both men and animals - and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt; I am the Lord"*(12:12).

It's a challenge, I think, for us to come to terms with the tremendous moral issues which this plague raises. Not only is the slaughter (can't think of another word to describe it) of the Egyptian firstborn the means God used to release His people from slavery, it is the angel of the Lord who smote the firstborn. In other words, while we can refer to the deaths caused by the other plagues as *'Acts of God'* (meaning that some natural disaster occurred) this tenth plague is very literally an *'Act of God'* for God Himself slew the firstborn of Egypt (11:4-8; 12:29).

How can we find it possible to justify God's actions here? Not only do innocent children die, but this is the basis for an annual Passover Feast celebrated by Israel and one that is to be carried on forever (12:14, etc.). It's one thing to remember genocide, as we do on Holocaust Memorial Day, but it's quite another thing to celebrate such acts, but in our text God is to be praised on the basis of the slaughter of the Egyptians. It's quite a conundrum isn't it? As Christians, we are to praise and worship God, regardless of whether or not we understand His actions, and that, as God, He is free to act in any way He chooses.

4. A friend asks you what Jesus' death means to you. How do you answer simply and succinctly?

5. Paul spoke of the significance of Communion for the Christian. Discuss whether regular Communion enhances our remembrance of Jesus' *'broken body and shed blood'* or whether it becomes too familiar and loses its significance in the process (Do feed back your thoughts to Pauline Woolnough).

6. What significant moments in your own spiritual journey would you want to commemorate and celebrate?



Be sure to make arrangements to celebrate an Agape/Passover Meal on Maundy Thursday, 29 March, either in your Home Group or at Emmanuel. We eat at 7.00 pm preparing for a hasty departure at 8.45 pm for a 9.00 pm Service of Communion at Emmanuel.



Looking Upwards (40 mins)
Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. How does it change your understanding of the plagues to know that they weren't directed primarily at the people of Egypt but at their gods?

2. How would you respond to someone who points out that some of the plagues could have arisen naturally? Which aspect of the plagues show undeniable evidence of supernatural origins?

3. How did both deeds and faith both play a part in the Passover? How do they play a part in your own salvation story?

3. God's Passover Instructions (12:1-13, 21-23)

Exodus 12 is one of those incredible passages of the Bible. It's one of those passages that every believer should be familiar with because it speaks about the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus. This chapter has Jesus woven all throughout it. Like any great sermon, it's all about Jesus!

It's worth pointing out that God wanted the Israelites to know (and the reader of New Testament, too) that the institution of the Passover was done in accordance with direct divine revelation. This wasn't a feast which Israel devised but one which God designed and very carefully prescribed. The instructions for the celebrations of the first Passover were specific, and dealt with several aspects of the feast:

(a) The Time of the Passover Meal. A new religious calendar was given to the nation at this time. Since the Passover was the commencement of a new life, the month of Abib/Nisan was to be viewed, from this time forward, as the first month of the year (12:1-2). The Passover lamb was to be purchased or selected on the 10th day of the month, and slaughtered at twilight on the evening of the 14th.

(b) The Passover Lamb (12:3-8, 21-23). The Passover animal was to be a male yearling, either a goat or a sheep (12:5). There was to be one sacrificial animal per household, unless the family was too small to consume one. Under such circumstances, two families could share one (12:4). The blood of the animal was to be put on the sides and tops of the door frames (12:7). This blood was to serve as a sign, which would protect the Israelites from the angel of death (12:13, 23). This all seems quite barbaric to us, but the sacrifice of animals was part of their religious ritual.

(c) The Passover Meal. The Passover meal was largely provided by the sacrifice. The animal was to be roasted whole over the fire, not boiled or eaten raw. Each household was to eat the meal inside the door on which the animal's blood had been placed. The meat was eaten along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread (12:8). Surplus food was not to be kept overnight, but was to be burned (12:10). There would be no "leftovers" for dinner because they would be long gone before another meal could be eaten.

This is why the meal was to be eaten with an atmosphere of readiness and anticipation. They were to eat the meal in the same way we would eat in an airport restaurant, knowing that the departure of our flight was about to be announced. Nowadays, we would have our coats on and our hand luggage in hand. In that day, they were to have their cloak tucked in (so they could hurry without tripping over it) their sandals on their feet, and their staff in hand (12:11).

(d) The Participants of the Passover. The Passover was a corporate celebration in that all Israel observed the meal, just as Moses had instructed them (12:28, 50). On the other hand, each family was responsible for its own sacrificial animal, its own act of placing the blood on the door frame, and its own celebration of the meal. Also, foreigners who placed themselves under the Abrahamic Covenant (as signified by circumcision) were allowed to participate, with no distinctions made between them and (other) Israelites (12:43-49).

4. The Passover Plague (12:29-30)

There is absolutely no sensationalism in these verses, only the most cursory account of the fulfillment of the Word of the Lord, spoken through Moses. At midnight, the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain, from the king of Egypt to its cattle, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh to that of the prisoner. The weeping and wailing that night was not like anything ever heard in the land before.

5. The Passover Celebration (12:21-27, 43-49)

The Passover was to become a permanent part of Israel's religious liturgy (cf. 12:24-25). There were several reasons for the Passover celebration (some of which were to be understood at a later time):

(a) The Passover was a memorial of deliverance of Israel, accomplished by the mighty power of God: *"This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the Law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand"* (13:9).

(b) The Passover was intended to serve as a means of instruction for the future generations of Israel (12:26-27; 13:8, 14-16). God directed that the meaning of the celebration was to be explained to the children (13:8). Also, when a child asks the meaning of a celebration, the parent is to teach its significance (12:26-27; 13:14). God therefore designed these celebrations as occasions for instruction. Thus the story of the Exodus was to be retold, and its meaning reinforced. The "bitter herbs" (12:8) would certainly help the children gain some sensory stimulation in this educational endeavour.

(c) The Passover Lamb was a model (a type) of the Messiah, the 'Lamb of God' through whom God would bring salvation to both Israel and the Gentiles (12:5-7, 46-47). *"In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness"* (Hebrews 9:22).

There are several similarities between the Passover lamb and the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus. The sacrificial lamb was to be without defect (Exod. 12:5), just as the Lord Jesus was without blemish (1 Peter 1:19). It was the shed blood of the lamb which saved Israel's firstborn from the plague (12:12-13, 22-23), just as it is the shed blood of the Lamb of God which saves men from the judgment of God (1 Peter 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9). As there was to be no bone broken of the Passover lamb (12:46), so no bone of Jesus was broken (John 19:32-36).

6. The Passover and Jesus, the Lamb of God

In Genesis 4, a lamb is sacrificed for a single man; Exodus 12, a lamb is sacrificed for a family; Exodus 29, a lamb is sacrificed for a nation; John 1, a lamb is sacrificed for the whole world. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Messiah with the words: *"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29). The apostle Paul clearly identified the Lord Jesus as the Passover lamb: *"For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed"* (1 Cor. 5:7).

Illustration of three Israelite houses!!

You won't often hear a preacher say this, but here it's absolute gospel truth: *It doesn't matter what's on the inside, it's what's on the outside that counts.* It's not the interior – it's all about the blood on the doorposts. It's not about the Lord inspecting each household to see whether it's up to scratch. It's *only* about whether the household is sheltering under the blood. That is the *only* issue. And it's not even about how much faith you have in the blood. If the blood is applied at all, you're saved. Strong faith in the blood and wavering faith in the blood lead to exactly the same outcome. Because it's not the faith *in* the blood that saves it's *the* blood.

So often people say to me, "I don't have very strong faith." And I say "Me neither!" But thank God we're not saved by how strong our believing feelings are! Thank God we are saved, not so much by our faith *in* Jesus' blood, thank God we're saved *by* His blood! And when we really get that we can breathe a sigh of relief and say "Thank You Jesus"

It's not about the quality of your living, speaking, acting, praying. It's not even about the quality of your own faith. It's only about the blood. It's the quality of His death, not the quality of your life. Your status with God both now and into all eternity is not down to the quality of your life – it's purely down to the quality of His death. Your salvation has nothing to do with you and everything to do with him.

7. The Passover and the Christian

In the upper room, at the Last Supper Jesus, with those two simple elements of bread and wine, explained to his disciples the deeper meaning of the festival and, in doing so, related the Passover meal, and its historic, symbolic and spiritual significance, with his own journey to the cross and so the Passover, for the Christian, became a meal of remembrance and thanksgiving. The Passover was transformed into our Communion service by Jesus himself: *"This is my body broken for you, this is my blood poured out for you – Do this in remembrance of me."*

It's interesting to note that Jesus memorialises his death through bread and wine - not his life, or his miracles, nor his teaching, but his death. Jesus wants us to remember not only how he died, but also why he died.

We regularly share bread and wine together, the ultimate reminder of servanthood, surrender and sacrifice that empowers us to: *live and work to His praise and glory.* I don't know about you, but I need that something extra to enable me to do that. I need something extra to help me to cope with the rigours of life. I need something extra that puts my own feelings and my own pride to one side. I need something extra that puts my life into its true perspective. Because my heart isn't big enough to forgive those who hurt me. My heart isn't big enough to forgive those who cause me grief and upset. My heart isn't big enough to absorb all the pain around me in this world.

Remembering the dying love of Jesus on the cross, is that something extra I need in my life. The remembrance of Jesus' broken body and shed blood provides an opportunity for my personal healing and for the Lord to put right what is wrong in my heart and in my life. And it's through our participation in the Lord's Supper, of eating bread and drinking wine, that the Holy Spirit nourishes our souls and bodies and we are formed and empowered to be like him: not only to follow Jesus' example of humble service one to another; but, more importantly, to take up our own cross as we commit ourselves to that lonely road which may lead each one of us to pay the ultimate price for the sake of love.

Emmanuel Church Text for 2018

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry 'Abba Father.'

Romans 8:15