

Epworth Chapel on the Green
April 18, 2019
Maundy Thursday
Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander

Exodus 12:1-14
Psalm 78:14-20, 23-25
I Corinthians 11:23-26
Luke 22:14-30

In our Old Testament lesson, Moses instructs the children of Israel regarding what is to become the foundational event in their history, their Exodus from Egypt. At the heart of their exodus from slavery is the event that inaugurates it – the *Passover*.

To prepare for the Passover, the people are to take lambs without defect and slaughter them, place the blood on the door frames of their homes, and then eat a meal made from the lambs, along with bread and bitter herbs.

They are to do this because the death angel will then pass through the land and strike down every first born male that is Egyptian. But when the angel of death sees the blood on the doors of the houses of the children of Israel, he will “pass over” those homes and they will be spared.

This event -- the Passover -- becomes the central event in the Old Testament. It marks God’s deliverance of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt, and begins their identity as God’s chosen people. Because of this, **it is to be perpetually commemorated.**

The reason God commands the people to perpetuate the Passover through ritual meal and action is not merely because he wants the people to experience a *mental reminder* of this event.

The reason God commands the people to do this is because it is going to be necessary for people who come along generations later to be able to take part in what God has done, *to experience this past event for themselves even though they are many years removed from it.*

And so, through the ritual words and actions of the Passover meal, the people who came generations later did just that. They experienced *for themselves* their deliverance from Egypt and their identity as God's people. In a sense, the Passover was something that stood *outside of time*, even though it originally occurred at a point in time.

The Passover, then, was a *type*, a pre-figurement of something greater that would occur in the future.

Come with me now hundreds of years later into the first century. At the time of Jesus, many ancient Jews were waiting for the restoration of Israel in a *new Exodus*.

The people were hopeful, based on the writings of the Old Testament prophets, that a *new Moses* would come and that God would use him to recapitulate the events of the first exodus from Egypt. The hope and prayer was

that this new Moses would lead the people on another exodus where there would be *New Covenant*, a new temple, and a new Promised Land.

With this longing at near fever pitch, Jesus sat together with his disciples in an upper room on a night much like this one. As he did, he began to show his disciples that he was that *new* Moses who had come to lead the people in their long anticipated *new* Exodus.

And as the leader of the new exodus, Jesus revealed to his disciples that ***he himself was the true Passover Lamb***, whose body and blood was about to be offered up so that God's people might be delivered from their slavery -- a slavery not to Egypt, but to sin and its deadly consequences.

But a new exodus required a *new Passover*. And like the first Passover, the new Passover required the sacrifice of a holy, spotless, unblemished Lamb. And like the first Passover, the *new* Passover required the eating of that Lamb by God's delivered people.

And so it is that through the offering up of himself as the true Passover Lamb, Jesus leads *us* out of slavery to sin and the old life, and into a New Covenant where we are born again to a living hope of resurrection and eternal life.

By God's grace, brothers and sisters, we have the opportunity to participate in a *new* Exodus. This world is not our final home. We are looking for a city whose builder and maker is God.

For the full implications of what this means, we'll need to be back tomorrow and Saturday evening. So stay tuned.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.