

Exodus 13-14

Let's do just a quick recap here this evening to kind of set the stage. At this point 10 different plagues have come upon the people of Egypt and really to me the blame lies with the king. The king had multiple opportunities in his life to simply let the people of Israel go but each and every time he chose not to.

Each of the 10 plagues that came upon Egypt were designed to get their attention and show them two things. First, it demonstrated the power and authority of God Almighty...We might remember the king had said "Who is the Lord that I might obey Him." and now the king and the people of Egypt know for certain who God is.

The second thing that these plagues showed was that the gods that the Egyptians served were really quite powerless as each of the plagues were designed to directly confront them.

The final plague that took place we looked at last week as God declared that all the firstborn in the land of Egypt were going to be killed. This sadly included both people and animals. We were told by the end of the scriptures we looked at that there was not one house that was not affected.

As the Egyptians were judged the Lord gave commands to the children of Israel that they were to take a lamb and they were to kill the lamb and then take the blood and apply it to the frames of their doors. As the Israelites did this in obedience and by faith the Lord would then Passover their homes and we talked about how this whole scenario pointed straight to Jesus who is our Passover lamb.

Once this final judgment took place the king of Egypt quickly called Moses to himself and demanded that the people of Israel would get out of the land and they were to take their kids with them, their animals and anything else they needed to serve the Lord.

We might remember it wasn't just a few thousand people that left the land of Egypt but instead it was 600,000 men which did not include women and children...You can imagine the Israelites were all leaving in great haste and with them were all the animals they had accumulated...I think it would have been a little chaotic to leave in the middle of the night the way they did and yet the Israelites were now free from the rule of the Egyptians...It had taken great acts of God to accomplish this and yet it was done just as God had said.

You and I should remember that we too have been set free from slavery as we were all slaves of sin and like the Israelites the price it took to redeem us from the enemy was the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

All right let's move forward here and I'm going to do this just slightly different here today in these first several verses if you will look with me at verses 1-2 which say **Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine.”**

And then look with me at verses 11-16 which say this ¹¹**“And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, ¹² that you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males *shall be* the Lord's. ¹³ But every firstborn of a donkey you**

shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴ So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' ¹⁶ It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt."

Now we'll be back to the verses we moved over here in just a few minutes **but these things go together so I wanted to just look at it all at once. I'm not sure how all this played out as the people of Israel were leaving and when exactly Moses said these things to the people but as all of this took place with the death of all the firstborns in the land of Egypt God then told Moses that the people of Israel were from here on out to consecrate unto Him all the firstborn whether it be man or beast and the Lord said they are to be His.**

We are then told in verses 11-16 that this was to take place not just while the children of Israel were heading to the promised land that God had for them but it was to continue after they had come into the land as well.

Please take special note that when it came to human life that it was valuable unto the Lord. I say that life was valuable to God because throughout history there has been consistent destruction of life and

even in the days of Moses it was known that the Phoenician culture would actually take their 1st born children and sacrifice them in honor of their gods.

Parents as they came to redeem their children would actually pay 5 shekels to do so as dictated in Numbers 18 and some Jewish people still practice this today in what is a tradition called Pidyon haben...

We might even remember later on that the Israelites were guilty of child sacrifice and they were judged for it as the prophet Jeremiah spoke against them...God has never desired that human life would be taken rather He stands up for the right to life and we know the Word makes it clear that God is intimately involved in knitting every life together while in the womb.

You might take note as well that there is a promise given in verse 11 when the Word says WHEN THE LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites as He swore...This is not an if or a maybe or if you behave the proper way I will do it but instead the idea is it shall be done.

We can also see here that as the people of Israel were obedient to following the consecration of the firstborn that again we can see in verse 14 that the children were going to be asking questions as they saw the firstborn of the animals and the children given unto the Lord...And again as we have seen with the Passover the idea was that this would create an opportunity for the parents to tell their children of the great deliverance God had given them from the Egyptians.

Each time the firstborn was consecrated to the Lord it was a remembrance of the grace of God in the lives of His people...So we have the Passover that was a remembrance and then the

consecration of the firstborn and then if you look at verses 3-10 we have a third remembrance for the people which says this ³ **And Moses said to the people: “Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this *place*. No leavened bread shall be eaten. ⁴ On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. ⁵ And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. ⁶ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day *there shall be* a feast to the Lord. ⁷ Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. ⁸ And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ‘*This is done* because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt.’ ⁹ It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt. ¹⁰ You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.**

Humanity has multiple flaws because of our sinful nature **but one thing we tend to forget about is the goodness** and mercy of God and His great deliverance in our lives **and that’s why the Lord put into place all these times** of remembrance we see in this period of Israel’s history.

In these verses here we are talking about the feast of unleavened bread which we talked about last week...**if you remember we talked**

about how leaven is a representation of sin in our lives and it was really amazing that God first had the people of Israel celebrate the Passover and then afterwards the leaven was removed from their lives entirely for 7 days...It's the same way in our walk with God. First we are saved as we apply the blood of Jesus by faith and then the Lord cleanses us and begins to sanctify us or set us apart to Himself...Along with this comes an expectation that the leaven or sin in our lives will be thrown out as the Spirit has given us all we need to do so.

Notice again in verse 8 the importance that was placed on sharing this with your children, talking to them about the greatness of God and passing along all the Lord had done in their lives...We have talked about this repeatedly but I sure hope that all parents myself included recognize the incredible responsibility that God has given us in life to minister to our kids. If we don't teach our kids the value of following Jesus the world has no problem stepping in and teaching them how to embrace the ways of this world.

You might take brief note of verse 9 where there was an emphasis the Lord placed on this that was to permeate the life of every person of the people of Israel. It was to be put into practice both on the outside of a person's life and it was to sink to their hearts and then come from their mouths and notice again it was to be done year after year.

I know that was a brief overview of these verses but let's keep moving here in our study and now we come back to the narrative that the people of Israel are heading out of the land if you look at verses 17-18 which say this ¹⁷Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the

Philistines, although that was near; for God said, “Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt.”¹⁸ So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.

God had made it clear throughout the history of His people that they were to one day inhabit the land of the Canaanites and if you just do some research you can see that this was the land of modern day Israel and the Philistines were situated in what we know as Gaza.

For homework I would just encourage you to do a little map research and you will see that the easiest and fastest way to the land of Canaan was to take the shoreline and you would then arrive in the territory of the Philistines. This journey would have taken approximately 2 weeks.

The Philistines were a mighty people and they were known to be a people of war and God knew this and He knew that the people of Israel if they went straight to this location and they had to face battle that they would be prone to desire to return to Egypt.

Simply said God knew that the shortest path was not the best path for His people. The Lord knew that they needed to first learn how to trust Him and follow by obedience before they were ready to take on such a task.

I'm not sure if you have ever had this happen in your life but there are times when I am in a situation and I feel like I can see the answer and I can in my mind have it all worked out and I'm ready to see things come to a conclusion but for some reason God allows things to go a different direction...Sometimes it may not make sense why a trial

continues the way it does...but the Lord knows what we need and many times trials and tribulations are given to us to build up our faith and to minister to us in ways we can't imagine or grab hold of.

Instead of taking a northern direct route to the land of Canaan the Lord instead directed them to go south and again if you look at a map the journey they took was a long one with many difficulties that came up on the way.

Verse 19 says this ¹⁹ And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you." This may seem weird to us but to Joseph it sure wasn't as he some 400 years earlier had required by oath that the people of Israel take his bones with them when they left the land of Egypt.

Joseph if you remember was the one that had been sold into slavery and then went to prison before ending up in the service of the king of Egypt...He had really been used of God then to save the world as he wisely stored up food for 7 years of famine that were going to take place.

Even though Joseph was a man with great possessions and incredible wealth and privilege he still held on to the fact that the people of God had been promised a land and in having his bones taken with them it was like Joseph was saying I am looking forward to the day the Lord has promised. You can read about the requirement to take his bones with them in Genesis 50:25.

Verses 20-22 say ²⁰ So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. ²¹ And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. ²² He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from* before the people.

I really appreciate that the Lord led the people each day as they left the land of Egypt. It's awesome to me that God is near to us, that He desires to work in us and as He does so He doesn't do it from afar but instead His Spirit lives in us to lead us and help us.

For the Israelites God was going to lead them by doing so from a physical representation of a cloud by day and fire by night. You can imagine the people during the day walking through the wilderness and its sunny outside and the Lord as He led them provided a cloud to walk under providing comfort...and then at night as the desert would have been cold, the Lord provided warmth for them in a pillar of fire.

There is also a supernatural element to this in that the people of Israel could travel both by day and night much easier as God did this.

Spiritually speaking you and I must have our eyes focused on the Lord, looking for His leading in our lives and trusting that He will show us the way as we follow after Him...He may not take us the easiest way but He will take us the way that is most beneficial for our lives.

Chapter 14 if you look at verses 1-4 which say this 14 Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²“Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the

sea. ³ For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ‘They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.’ ⁴ Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.” And they did so.

As the children of Israel are now travelling to the south from Egypt they are told by the Lord to turn and camp in a place called Pi Hahiroth and this location is debated today as it’s not exactly known.

The Lord is really setting a trap for the Egyptians. In turning and camping the way the Israelites did it really pinned them up against the Red Sea and when they did this the king of Egypt was then going to respond by believing the Israelites are lost and the wilderness now has them trapped...and the Lord is actually doing this to harden the king’s heart which will lead to the Egyptians coming after them that the Lord might gain honor through it.

We might keep in mind that the Israelites had been in Egypt for several hundred years and they hadn’t left before so this is all new to them, they don’t know the area at all...Only Moses would have had some knowledge...So the Israelites are just following by faith as the cloud and the fire are going before them.

That’s kind of how it is for us as well sometimes as we follow Jesus isn’t it? We can feel lost, we can be in territory we’ve never been before and sometimes we don’t know what the end result is going to be in a situation and yet if the Lord is leading, we like the Israelites must follow by faith.

Look at verses 5-9 which say ⁵ Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” ⁶ So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. ⁷ Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. ⁸ And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness. ⁹ So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.

Now we can see that just as the Lord said in the previous verses **that the heart of the king and his servants have** had a change...**and they are thinking they have just lost their labor force of 600,000 men and so now they decide they are going to go after them.**

We learn here that he took 600 of his best chariots and had captains over them and he went after the children of Israel pursuing them and we are told they caught up to them at Pi Hahiroth where the Israelites had encamped.

I do think it's interesting that when they went after them they said the following “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” I can suggest several answers to this that they seemed to forget at this point. How about because you just lost all your firstborn because of your stubbornness...**How about because it's clear the God of the Hebrews is the one in authority? How about because 10 plagues came upon you because of our refusal to let**

them go? How about because our land and our economy and our gods have all been wiped out?

It's amazing to me how quickly we can forget that God is God and we are not and that submitting to Him is the safe way to go.

Look at verses 10-12 which say ¹⁰And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. ¹¹Then they said to Moses, “Because *there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? ¹²Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For *it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.*”*

You can imagine being the people of Israel and here you are out in the wilderness and suddenly you start to see large clouds of dust in the air and before too long you realize the armies of Egypt are coming after you...and notice they were very afraid and they cried out to the Lord.

So you have the Red Sea on one side and you have the Egyptian army on the other and you really have nowhere to run or hide.

As they cried out to the Lord notice what they did next...rather than relying on the Lord to deliver them, rather than trusting that He would stand in their defense, rather than remembering the miracles God had done on their behalf they instead come to a place of despair.

And what do they do in their despair? Well, they cried out to the Lord about it but then right afterwards they placed the blame on Moses.

Poor Moses all this man is trying to do is to be obedient to the Lord and the people are now coming after him and they are accusing him of taking them out of Egypt and into the wilderness to die.

Notice also that they even say it would be better to be back in Egypt and serve them...You know that's just sad to me and actually a little amazing that this people group that God had done so much to deliver are now really retreating and giving up so quickly.

I think that this can easily apply to our own lives as well as we go through life, when someone finds freedom in Jesus initially that person often expresses great joy over what the Lord has done...but before too long trials will come along and the temptation will be let me just go back to where I was before, thinking that will be better or easier.

You and I need to persevere and trust the Lord will bring us through those times where it seems the situation is impossible to pass through. The Israelites failed in this but I'm thankful the Lord as we will see is going to stand on their behalf.

Let's see how Moses responded in verses 13-14 which say ¹³**And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. ¹⁴The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."** The Israelites are quaking in their boots and Moses is listening to them and notice what He does...He is quick to let the people know that they need to stand still and rest and see the salvation of God that He would do for them...And he even says the Egyptians are not going to be a problem for them ever again after

this...He even reminds them the Lord would fight for them...So Moses is standing in faith here trusting the Lord to do a great work.

There are times that we need to learn to Stand still and wait for the salvation of the Lord...That can be hard can't it? We as humans always want to fix things and make things better and sometimes we just have to face it that we are never going to be able to make everything well again...Sometimes the Lord has to intervene.

So the people come to Moses and they are pretty upset and then Moses responds with great faith but watch what happens next in verses 15-18 which say ¹⁵ **And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶ But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. ¹⁷ And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁸ Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."**

Notice the Lord said to Moses "why do you cry to me?" that tells us that Moses was probably privately saying "Lord how is this going to happen?" "Lord I know you said you were going to stand up for us but I can't see how this one is going to work out?" It seems to me on the outside Moses was steadfast and strong but on the inside he may have been going through some different emotions.

The Lord then tells Moses it's time to move forward so the time of praying and standing is done and it's time to take action...sometimes we can error in that we need to simply move forward in

faith...sometimes we seek the Lord and we seek for answers and we sit and wait and wait and wait some more and the Lord will say to us “It’s time to walk by faith and move forward” I suppose there is a time and a place for waiting and a time and a place to get going.

The Lord then tells Moses to stretch out his rod over the sea and that as he did so the waters would divide and the people of God would walk over on dry land...after this the Egyptians would follow and the Lord tells Moses they would die at this point and that they would then know that He was the Lord.

It’s a hard way to learn who God is when your actions are tied to your heart being hard. You can learn who God is the easy way or the hard way...The easy way is to humble yourself before God Almighty and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior...The hard way is seen in what happens to the Egyptians as they were repeatedly disobedient to the requirements of God...Today the hard way is rejecting Jesus from being the Lord of your life.

Now let’s quickly see how this played out if you look at verses 19-20 which say ¹⁹**And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. ²⁰ So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.**

This is pretty cool to me, you can imagine this giant cloud moving from in front of the people of Israel to being between them and the Egyptians and one side is getting darkness and the other side is

getting light...this kept the Egyptians from getting any closer as the Lord is protecting His people.

Notice also the Angel of God is mentioned and this is what is called a theophany or an appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament.

Verses 21-23 say ²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. ²²So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Can you imagine witnessing this? Water stacking on top of itself, dry land appearing where it should have been wet and impassable...This was a miracle to say the least...Commentators suggest that this strip of land would have needed to have been about ½ mile across in order for all the people of Israel to pass through as quickly as they did...and we can see that the Egyptians came right on into the Sea after them.

Verses 24-31 say ²⁴Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. ²⁵And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."

²⁶Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.” ²⁷ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. ²⁸ Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, *and* all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. ²⁹ But the children of Israel had walked on dry *land* in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

³⁰ So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.

The Egyptians continued to pursue them and we can see the Lord tore off their chariot wheels and they could barely drive them anymore and some of them wanted to turn back but I don't think the king would have it...and then the waters came crashing back upon them as Moses stretched out his hand once again.

You can imagine the carnage that took place as all that water would have forcefully come upon the Egyptians. It was a sad day for them.

And so once again we see the Lord make a distinction between His people and the people of this world and the Lord has shown who He is

to the Egyptians and He has kept all His promises to His people and the people have believed the Lord and Moses his servant.

So God has shown Himself to be powerful and mighty once again just as He does so on an everyday basis for those who are His kids today.

Next week we'll be looking at a song that Moses sang unto the Lord as He had shown Himself mighty on behalf of His people.

Let's pray.