

Lesson 54

God Sends the Final Plague

God sent the final plague on the firstborn of Egypt but protected the Israelites.

Overview

Lesson Focus

God created the Passover to protect the Israelites from the final plague and to remind them of his power. The death of the firstborn sons and livestock of Egypt showed that God was more powerful than Pharaoh. The Passover foreshadowed Jesus as the spotless Lamb whose blood saves us from our sins.

Key Passages

Exodus 12:3–14, 12:29–34; John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how God protected the Israelites from the final plague.
- Describe how the Passover foreshadowed Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse

Isaiah 41:10 Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Pharaoh's refusal to let the Israelites go led to God's judgment through ten plagues that demonstrated his power over false Egyptian gods. The plagues ruined water, destroyed crops and livestock, caused boils, and hindered work (Exodus 7–10). Throughout the nine plagues, Pharaoh would not relent to release the Israelites (Exodus 10:27) until the tenth and final plague, which took the lives of all of the firstborn sons of Egypt, including Pharaoh's own son (Exodus 12:29), as well as the firstborn of their livestock. The term translated "firstborn" is a masculine noun and a title given only to sons elsewhere in Scripture. Thus, it appears that God struck the firstborn sons and not daughters in this plague.

To protect the Israelites from the tenth plague, God prescribed the Passover. The people were commanded to select a male lamb without blemish and sacrifice it at twilight (Exodus 12:5–6) and then spread the blood on the doorposts of their houses. When God came through the land to strike the Egyptians and saw the blood on the doorposts, he would pass over the houses

with blood, sparing their firstborn from death (Exodus 12:22–23). God gave additional instructions regarding the Passover meal. The sacrificed lamb was to be roasted with fire and eaten that night. Any remains were to be burned (Exodus 12:9–10). Unleavened bread and bitter herbs were included in the meal as reminders of their hasty departure and bitter bondage.

The Israelites followed God’s commands for the Passover and families were protected from experiencing the death of their firstborn, which devastated every Egyptian home (Exodus 12:29–30). This final plague showed that God was supreme over Pharaoh, who was worshipped by his people as a god. But Pharaoh was powerless to save even his own firstborn son. Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron by night and gave them and the Israelites permission to leave with their flocks and herds (Exodus 12:31–32).

In addition to protecting his people from the tenth plague, God used the Passover to foreshadow Jesus, our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). By his shed blood, Jesus granted eternal life to all who would repent and believe in his name (1 Peter 1:18–19).

Historical/Apologetics Background

The Passover established in Exodus continues to be celebrated by Jewish people as a seven- or eight-day holiday in March or April. It commemorates their deliverance by God from bondage in Egypt and, more broadly, their freedom as Jews. A Passover meal called Seder includes a plate of food with both biblical and traditional items. A vegetable (e.g., parsley, celery, boiled potato) is dipped in salt water, which represents the tears of the Israelites during their bondage. The roasted shank bone of a lamb stands for the Passover lambs, which were sacrificed and eaten to protect them from the tenth plague. A hard-boiled egg, a traditional item, may symbolize mourning for the loss of the two temples in Jerusalem. Charoset, from the Hebrew word for clay, is a mixture of apples, nuts, and spices. It represents the bricks and mortar the Israelites were forced to make during their slavery in Egypt. A bitter herb (horseradish) is a reminder of the bitterness of servitude. Matzah is included as the unleavened bread requirement.

While modern Passover meals recount the slavery and deliverance of the Israelites, God intended for this meal to point to the coming Messiah, Jesus, who would offer himself as the perfect Passover Lamb to save mankind from sin. Jesus fulfilled all the requirements for being the Passover lamb. First, the Passover lamb had to be without blemish. As the perfect God-Man, Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He lived the perfect life we cannot. Second, the lamb had to be a one-year-old male—neither too young nor too old. Jesus, as a man in his thirties, fulfilled this requirement. Third, the blood was spread on the doorposts of the houses to “cover” or protect those inside. Jesus’ blood on the cross covered man’s sin and freed us from eternal death. Those who repent and trust in Christ receive his protection from the wrath and punishment of God. Even Jesus’ manner of death, suffering hours of crucifixion but having none of his bones broken (John

19:31–34), was like the Passover lamb being roasted with fire and having no broken bones (Exodus 12:8, 12:46).

In addition to the Passover lamb, other elements of the Passover meal contained important reminders for the Israelites. Unleavened bread reminded them of the haste in which they would depart from Egypt. Their dough did not have time to rise before they packed it up and headed out (Exodus 12:34). God also used leaven to represent sin. By commanding the Israelites to eat unleavened bread during Passover and to remove all leaven from their houses, God emphasized the need for cleansing from sin. This reminder of the sin problem also pointed to Christ, who would solve this problem once for all time. The New Testament draws on this analogy of sin and leaven, which was well understood from the Old Testament Scriptures. For example, Paul urged the Christians in Corinth to cleanse themselves of all leaven (sin) (1 Corinthians 5:6–8). The bitter herbs, also part of the Passover meal, were a reminder of the bitterness of slavery. Later, when the Israelites were comfortable and prosperous, God wanted them to remember their humble beginnings and their reliance on him for deliverance. Their time in Egypt was humbling, but through it, God showed himself strong. No other god called a nation his own and delivered them with such miracles as the Lord did for Israel. God did this because of his love and promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

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