

**GOD IS KEEPING HIS PROMISES:
RESCUING US AND MAKING US A FREE PEOPLE
Exodus 12: 21-42**

Please review this week's catechism question.

INTRODUCTION

What are some significant annual anniversaries for you and your family? Why are they significant? Are there any anniversaries (whether personal or national) that you used to celebrate/remember but no longer do? Why is that?

We have come in our consideration of the story of God's delivering the nation of Israel out from the slavery of Egypt to the day on which God transformed Israel. This is the night and day upon which Israel becomes a free and independent nation. Like the 4th of July, like Veteran's Day, like Sept. 11, it is a day that changed the history of the nation forever and of every individual person in the nation and is to be remembered and commemorated throughout the generations of Israel.

This deliverance foreshadows the deliverance that Jesus has accomplished for us. I want to be quite blunt about the purpose of this study. Over the almost thirty years I've been a Christian and have been involved in talking with others about their faith I have observed a very troubling reality. Most Christians begin the Christian life full of joy that God has forgiven them of their sins and promised them eternal life not due to anything they have done but by what Jesus has done. New Christians regularly report how meaningful communion is to them, how they cry when they sing in church. Those newly converted to Christ delight to be with other Christians and seek out opportunities to develop friendships with other believers. Yet how often does the joy fade and the practices of Christian life and worship become merely perfunctory duties. Rather than seeking out other believers we complain about how nobody ever calls us or how unfriendly is our church. But most troubling of all is the fact that for so many professing Christians, being saved by Christ is far down the list of things that occupy our time, our thoughts or thrill our hearts. In this

study we are out to discover that belonging to Jesus Christ is the greatest thing that can ever happen to anyone and ought to be at the center of our attention every day.

STUDY

1. Prior to chapter 12, what has been the primary danger or difficulty for the Israelite people?

They are suffering under cruel and harsh slavery to the Egyptians.

2. In chapter 12, especially vv. 12-13, 23 & 27, what is the primary danger facing the Israelite people? What is it that the killing of the lamb and the spreading of the blood will save them from?

The great danger facing the Israelites is having God enter their house and kill the firstborn males in their homes. The danger that the Passover lamb delivers them from is not slavery but divine wrath.

3. Use your imagination. Describe what took place on the evening of the 14th day of the first month and into the morning of the 15th day in each Israelite home. What activities took place? What possible emotions were experienced? In light of their present condition (still slaves) and where they are going (into the desert), what were some of the immediate needs and feelings that would have been overshadowed by the threat of God's killing the firstborn?

That night, at twilight, in every believing Hebrew home, the lamb that has lived with each family for 4 days has its neck slit and its blood is drained into a large bowl. Then the father of each home takes the bowl and a bunch of hyssop and standing outside his door, he dips the hyssop into the bowl and paints the sides and top of his door with blood. Then the families gather inside and shut the door and wait as the lamb is roasted over the fire. They share a meal of lamb and unleavened bread and bitter herbs nervously awaiting the command to flee from Egypt. They are dressed for travel and prepared to run at a moment's notice.

There is a terror let loose in Egypt on this night that is worse than the horror of slavery. During this night, the greatest fear is not of Egyptian soldiers knocking on your door, but of the destroying angel of God coming to kill your firstborn sons. The greatest concern isn't with how they will live in the desert or what kind of work they will be forced to do the next day. All other fears are far overshadowed by this great terror, as the families wait for this final judgment. There is nothing more important than to escape from this fury that is being poured out on Egypt. So families sit gathered together and wait to see if the blood will hold the terror at bay. Every home is helpless and defenseless against the divine anger except for the blood smeared on the doors. Then, in the middle of the night, as children sleep while adults talk in muted tones and keep watch on the door of their homes, a great cry arises throughout Egypt as every Egyptian home, at the same time, is awakened to find the firstborn males in their homes are dead. God passes through Egypt and passes over the doors that he sees are painted with blood but he visits death upon every unstained home. The wailing of grief and terror increases as each Egyptian home realizes that their private loss has been multiplied throughout the entire land from the highest home to the lowest. The Egyptians discover on this night that it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

4. What is it that the Israelites ought to learn on this night and be reminded of for the generations to come as they celebrate the Passover year by year? What are we to learn from this?

On this night the Israelite people come to understand that they are subject to God's wrath and that they have only escaped because of the blood of the lamb that God has provided for them. They ought to learn on this night that their biggest problem is not that they are slaves in Egypt but that they ought to die for their many sins. Their greatest concern is not how to live in the desert but how to escape God's just wrath. You could not conceive of a more vivid illustration of the danger every human being is in and of the power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ to rescue everyone who takes refuge in him. It is only when you live as though God's destroying angel is just outside the door, ready to bring judgment, while you and your family wait within that you will be delivered from all lesser fears and troubles. What

greater thing could happen to any one of us than to have God pass over our sins and not kill us and send us to hell? To pass through the night of his wrath because you have taken refuge behind the blood of Jesus Christ is the best and greatest thing that could happen to you. It is better than having sex or getting a job you love or having friends to do stuff with on Friday night or being healthy or losing weight. If you are trusting in Jesus Christ and have thus escaped God's wrath, being joined to the people of God forever, the best thing that can happen to you has happened and there is nothing left to fear.

5. When is it most difficult to remember that your greatest problem is your own sin and the best thing that could ever happen to you is to escape God's wrath due you for your sin?

The saving work of God in Christ is the center of our attention because it is deliverance from death and hell.

6. According to vv. 24-27 and v. 42, what is will happen every year after this?

While each individual family will escape the wrath by putting blood on each individual door, yet they are not being saved as individuals but as an entire nation. They are all to celebrate the Passover on the same night, in the same way for as long as they are a nation. On the tenth day of the first month of every year that follows this day, every home is to select a year old male lamb without defect and have it come live with them for four days. Then, at twilight of the fourteenth day they are to kill the lamb and place its blood on the doorways of their homes. They are to roast the lamb whole and whatever they don't eat they are to burn up with fire. They are to remove all the leaven from their homes and eat only unleavened bread for a whole week. They are to have a community wide worship service on the first day and the last day of this week. When they do this, their children are going to ask them, "Why are you doing this?" At that time they are to explain to their children how God came to Egypt to destroy all the firstborn sons of every home but that when he saw the blood of the lamb on the door of their houses he passed over and did not destroy the firstborn in their homes. The entire community is to remember together and pass on to their children the fact that they are a people saved by the blood

of the lamb. They are the people of God by virtue of their being preserved from God's wrath through the death of the lamb. It is the death of this lamb that stands at the center of the life of this community of people, not escaping from slavery.

7. Verses 24-28 are a description of the life of the church. What is to characterize us as God's people?

We are gathered together as a result of the death of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The meaning and benefits of the death of this lamb form the subject matter of our corporate life and discussion. We are commissioned to pass on this message to succeeding generations. According to the end of v. 27 we are a worshipping community. There is a direct correlation between Moses' describing what their life will be like in the future, in the Land of Promise and their worshipping God in the present. They have not yet received what is promised. They are still slaves. Yet, they worship God for his salvation that is coming. This is just like us. We have not yet received the fullness of the salvation we are promised. Yet we understand how amazing this promise is and so we worship God together. We are impressed with the greatness of his promise and astonished by the scope of his salvation and so we declare his greatness together. Finally, notice that after they worship they do everything that God has told them to do. They don't just have a nice worship experience and then go on about their lives as they please. They don't just go to church and then continue to live like slaves. They kill the lambs and put up the blood and eat the meal and wait in their homes. Here is the final mark that distinguishes the true people of God: they obey God's word. We are the people of God by the death of the lamb and so we worship God and declare his greatness to the next generation, showing by our obedient lives that he and his salvation are better to us than everything else in life.

8. What are some ways you see our church exhibiting these characteristics? What are some ways we are falling short?

The saving work of God in Christ is the center of our attention because it creates the church.

9. Describe the ways the status and condition of the Israelite people changes in this 24-hour period. See vv. 31-39.

It would be hard to overstate the radical change that happens to the Israelites in this 24-hour period. It begins with the complete surrender of Pharaoh. God has determined it is time for Israel to leave and so he has, through his sovereign power, brought about the change of heart in Pharaoh. The man who refused to let Israel go, who murdered their children, who lied and sought to manipulate God's people for his own benefit now commands that they leave without any conditions. Pharaoh's release of Israel is a complete reversal of every demand he has made prior to this. In addition, he acknowledges that any hope he has for a happy future depends upon Moses' blessing of him. It is not only the heart of Pharaoh that is changed towards the Hebrews but the entire Egyptian population is in dread and urges the people to go. These people who have been enjoying the fruits of the Hebrews' slave labor, now urgently request them to leave before they all die. Egyptians are running into Jewish homes, helping them pack and hurrying them out the door. The Israelites are in such a hurry that they do not have time to let the bread rise or to bake it so they carry it on their shoulders as lumps of dough and they quickly leave behind their homes of slavery and begin the journey to the land of promise. As they are leaving they ask their Egyptian neighbors to hand over their wealth, as Moses instructed them to do. The Egyptians, under the sovereign power of God grant what the Israelites ask and hand over the wealth of Egypt to the Jewish nation. So Israel doesn't leave Egypt as a ragtag bunch of slaves but as a conquering, plundering army. They rule over their rulers.

10. The transformation of Israel is a foreshadowing of the transformation that takes place in the status of everyone who is born again by the Spirit of God. How do the following verses describe some of the ways our status is changed in an instant when we place our faith in Christ? (Feel free to share other ways the NT describes our instantaneous change of status at conversion.)

➤ Eph 2:1-7 *Dead in our sins to alive in Christ. Objects of God's wrath to objects of his affection. Slaves to Satan and to our lusts to seated with Christ in heavenly power and glory.*

- Col. 1:13 *Members of the kingdom of darkness to members of the kingdom of God's beloved Son.*
- Romans 5:1-11 & 8:1 *From being God's enemies to being at peace with God, reconciled to him. From being condemned to being justified. Helpless to save ourselves to being saved through Christ's death. Under wrath to being delivered from wrath.*
- Titus 3:3-7 *Foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by passions and pleasures to being saved, not by what we did but by his grace. Heirs with the hope of eternal life.*

11. How would the 2 million Israelites feel as they leave their homes with their firstborn sons alive, hear of Pharaoh's surrender, see the terror of the Egyptians as they urge them to leave, take the wealth of the Egyptians and travel from Rameses to Succoth?

There would be lots of emotions but chief among them would be amazement and awe at how complete has been their deliverance and at how radically their lives have been altered overnight.

12. If you are a Christian how did you respond to your changed status at your conversion? How are you continuing to respond to your changed status?

The saving work of God in Christ is the center of our attention because it results in a radical change of status.

13. Why does Moses end this account of their deliverance by telling us how many Israelites left Egypt and twice that the Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years? See Genesis 15:1-5 & 13-15.

What Moses is reminding us of is the promise that God made to Abraham and then to Isaac and then to Jacob that he would make them into a great nation and give them the land of Canaan. If you will remember, back in Genesis 15, God assured Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, with as many descendants as the stars of heaven, even though he did not as yet have even one son and he was

over 80 years old. When God told Abraham that he was going to do this for him he also told him that his descendants would be enslaved for about 400 years and then he would bring his descendants out of their slavery and give them the land of Canaan as their own possession. Moses is reminding us that these years of slavery, this multiplication from seventy people into 2 million people, this miraculous deliverance from slavery and into freedom, is a gift of grace and not due to the goodness or worthiness of the people of Israel. God chose Abraham and his descendants to be his people by grace, not by works. He freely, contrary to what Abraham deserved and contrary to what every individual Israelite deserved has fulfilled all the promises he made and is going to fulfill the ones yet to come. Moses ends his record by reminding us that there is no reason in us that we are Christians and on our way to heaven, but purely as a result of God's free, unearned love for sinners.

14. How does knowing that you are a Christian by God's free and sovereign grace and not because of anything you ever did affect you?

The saving work of God in Christ is the center of our attention because it is a work of grace.