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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

After having examined the previous nine plagues God sent upon Egypt, now he sends the final plague. By this time, the Hebrews were ready to leave. It reminds me of a story I heard about a fellow who was looking to buy a horse. He saw one advertised and he went out into the hills to this old farmer who had advertised a horse. He looked at the horse and the horse looked pretty good. The fellow said, "Well, I'd like to check him out. I'd like to take him for a test ride." The farmer said, "Well, okay, but I have to warn you that this is a religious horse and he doesn't respond to normal commands. He only responds to religious commands. The guy said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, he won't go unless you say, 'Praise the Lord' and he won't stop unless you say 'Amen!'" The guy said, "I don't believe that!" "That's true. He won't go unless you say, 'Praise the Lord' and he won't stop unless you say, 'Amen!'" The guy said, "Well, I know horses and I can make this horse go." He sat on that horse and clucked to the horse and said, "Giddyup!" The horse didn't move. He said, "Let's go!" The horse didn't move. He said, "C'mon, let's go! Getalong!" The horse didn't move. The farmer said, "I told you he wouldn't move unless you say, 'Praise the Lord.'" When he said, "Praise the Lord," that horse took off galloping, going lickety-split, running as fast as he could. The guy was kind of enjoying it for a while, but soon it got out of control. That old horse was running along there and he was running out wild. The guy started saying, "Whoa! Stop! Whoa! Cease! Desist!" and the horse didn't stop. He just kept on going. The guy couldn't remember what the word was "C'mon. Whoa! Stop! Please! Stop! Whoa!" pulling on the reins and nothing happened. The horse was just running along and he sees that pretty soon he is running toward the edge of a cliff. He thinks of every word he can think of and the horse still hasn't stopped at all so the guy says, "This is it! It's over for me!" So, he started saying the Lord's Prayer "Our father which art in heaven" He prayed all the way through it and he got to the end "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen" When he said, "Amen," that horse screeched to a stop and stopped right on the edge of that cliff. That guy said, "Whew! Praise the Lord!"

The Hebrew children were ready to Praise the Lord and they were ready to go and be set free from bondage. Tonight we're going to talk about "Passover and Freedom."

I. THE REFUSAL OF PHARAOH

First we're going to talk about the refusal of Pharaoh. Nine times he refused to let them go. So we see one more time God warns Pharaoh of what's going to happen and he still refuses.

Exodus 11:1-3. "Now the Lord had said to Moses, 'I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold.' (The Lord made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.)"

That's an interesting little footnote. A few months ago, I was talking about when the children of Israel got ready to build the first tabernacle out in the wilderness, how they had all this gold and silver to give for the building of God's tabernacle. This is where it came from. The Egyptians are

the ones who basically financed the first building campaign the Hebrews ever had.

Exodus 11:4-10. “So Moses said, ‘This is what the Lord says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse that there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.’ Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, ‘Go, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will leave.’ Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.”

“The Lord had said to Moses, ‘Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you—so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.’ Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.”

Why would God intentionally harden the heart of Pharaoh? It’s not something God did intentionally or specifically. Anytime someone turns from God and starts going deeper and deeper into disobedience to God, it is a natural consequence—you might call it a “supernatural” consequence—but it always happens. A person’s heart gets harder and harder and harder and harder. There’s a lesson we can learn from the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart. The New Testament writer of Hebrews says, “Beware, lest there be found in any of you a hardened heart.” How do you get a hardened heart? I’ll tell you how! You listen to God so many times and don’t respond so that your heart grows harder and harder. The illustration I often use about this is when I was a teenager working in a sawmill in the summertime; I worked with some men who pulled out rough, green lumber without wearing gloves, because they had handled that lumber for so many years, they had developed thick calluses on their hands. They could pull out that green, splintery lumber and the splinters would break off. The sad thing is, like Pharaoh, it is possible to develop calluses on your heart. There are some people who have heard it and heard it and heard it and they don’t respond in obedience. Calluses develop! That happened to Pharaoh. His heart was hardened and he refused.

II. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PASSOVER

The second thing I want to talk about is the requirements for Passover. God sets down some specific requirements. He says, “This is exactly the way I want you to do it!” God is a God of details and when God says he wants you to do something a certain way, you and I had better make sure we do it according to the way he says to do it! He sets out some specific requirements. Let’s begin reading in chapter 12 and read about some of these requirements.

Exodus 12:1. “The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ‘This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.’”

He is saying, “I’m not only going to do something for you tonight that’s going to set you free, I’m going to do something that’s going to give you an entire new future. This is a new calendar

for you. This is going to be something that you are going to commemorate for centuries and centuries and centuries.” Even today, our Jewish friends celebrate the Seder, or Passover, every year. This is where it started. He gives some of the specific requirements in verse 5.

Exodus 12:5-13. “The animals must be year-old males without defect and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and the tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire—head, legs and inner parts. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord’s Passover.”

“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgement on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

Let me tell you where I am going with this right now. I want you to understand how marvelously the Lord Jesus Christ fulfills the prophecy of the Passover lamb. Let’s look at five of the details the requirements for the Passover lamb.

1. Lamb: Prime age

First of all the lamb had to be a prime age prime age. It must be a male who is one year old and I am told that in lamb years, one year is the prime of life. How old was the Lord Jesus Christ when he was crucified? Thirty-three years. That’s the Lord Jesus at the prime age. That’s when he died. Have you ever wondered why Jesus didn’t die at 21, 45 or 62? He died at age 33, which many people consider to be the prime of life.

2. Lamb: No defect

Here’s the second detail. The lamb had to have no defect. It couldn’t be a lamb with a crippled leg. It couldn’t a lamb that was discolored. It could not be a sick or diseased lamb. It had to be a lamb with no defect. A perfect lamb! Is there anyone in this room who has no defect, morally spiritually? None of us qualify. There has only been one person who ever lived about whom you may say, “He had no character defect!” the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus himself fulfilled this prophecy.

3. Lamb: Slain at twilight

This requirement number three: The lamb had to be slain at twilight. God told Moses, “Just at twilight after you have fed this lamb for fourteen days, I want you to take this lamb and slaughter it. It’s to be killed.” We do know that the Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross at 9 a.m. and

hung on the cross for six hours, but he died close to twilight, because Mark tells us, “As evening was approaching” that’s when the soldiers came and broke the knees of the two thieves and Jesus was already dead. That’s when John tells us in John 19, that’s when the soldiers thrust the spear up into the ribcage of Jesus. It was just before twilight when Jesus died. Have you ever wondered why Jesus didn’t die at 9 a.m. or 8 p.m., why he died right before twilight? It was the fulfillment of this scripture.

4. Lamb: The blood must be applied

Number four, the blood of the lamb had to be applied. They slaughtered the lamb, and then they took the blood and literally painted the blood on the doorposts of their homes; then they painted it on the lintels of the doors. Then they walked in under the blood, safe. What do you think would have happened that night had they just taken that blood but not applied it to the doorpost? There would have been judgement! There would have been death! There would have been tragedy! What is the lesson there? The blood of Jesus was shed on the cross, but it has no impact on your life or my life until we allow the Holy Spirit to apply the blood to the doorpost and the lintel of our lives. Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

5. Lamb: Must be eaten with anticipation

Here is requirement number five: It had to be eaten with anticipation. God said, “Moses, tell all the people to get their traveling clothes on, because this means when you receive, eat and partake of this lamb, it means you are set free from bondage.” Wait a minute! They weren’t set free yet. The Death Angel had not passed over yet. Pharaoh had not said, “Get out of here!” yet. Why were they dressed up? It was an act of faith. Whenever you receive the Lamb of God by faith; when you receive Jesus Christ into your heart, you must receive him with anticipation, because at that moment by faith, you are set free from bondage. You say, “Well, I don’t feel very free!” Well trust me. You are set free when you receive Jesus Christ and you are ready to move forward into the plan God has set for you.

Is there really a connection between the Passover lamb and Jesus? Absolutely! Look at the scripture from 1 Corinthians 5:7. Paul is writing to the church at Corinth and he says, “Get rid of the old yeast [a picture of sin] that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” The New Testament says, “Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb.” What took place that night in Egypt really happened! You say, “Well, that’s history. What does it mean to me?” It means that Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb. That’s why you and I don’t have to kill a lamb anymore. God was trying to teach the Jewish people a lesson that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness or remission of sins as it says in Hebrews 9:22b. “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” As you have probably heard before, there is a trail of blood that runs throughout the Bible. A scarlet thread that runs all the way from Genesis to the book of Revelation. It started in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned and tried to cover themselves up with fig leaves. That is a picture of people trying to cover themselves by their own efforts. God came along and said, “Fig leaves don’t cut it!” The Bible says, “He covered them with an animal skin. Do you know what it took for God to cover Adam and Eve’s shame? It took the death of an animal! The Bible doesn’t say what kind

of animal it was, but I will not be at all surprised when I get to heaven if I discover the animal God killed to cover the sin and shame of Adam and Eve was a lamb! Blood had to be shed. Then you go on and here at Passover God said, “You have to allow the blood of the lamb to be spilled and applied to the doorpost and lintel of your door.” He was trying to teach them a lesson. He said, “I want you to do that every year! Fourteen Nisan, that day of the month every year, kill those lambs, apply the blood, receive and eat that lamb.” Later on when he is giving a more precise law, God sets down the requirements for what we call Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when one day during the year the High Priest took a ram and slit its throat and collected the blood in a bowl and walked into the “Holy of Holies” in the Tabernacle. Later in the Temple he took a hyssop branch and sprinkled and spread that blood on the mercy seat, then he came out symbolically declared that all the sins of the nation of Israel had been forgiven for that year. Then he would place his hands on a goat, that would be called “the scapegoat,” and that goat would be taken out into the wilderness. It was a picture of the sins of the people of Israel being taken away.

How many lambs do you think were killed? How many rams and bulls do you think have been killed in all the centuries of the Hebrew sacrificial system? You say, “Oooh, that’s gross! That’s gory! That’s sad that they had to kill all those animals. Why did God do that?” He was trying to teach them a lesson. He was trying to prepare them, condition them for a specific event in time in history. I am sure you’ve heard of Pavlov, the Russian psychologist who did research in what we call “conditioned response.” He took some dogs and he would ring a bell and feed the dog. Ring a bell, feed a dog. Ring a bell, feed a dog. Ring the bell, feed the dog... Then he could ring the bell without even giving any food to the dog and the dog would start salivating. That’s called a “conditioned response.” Throughout history, God was trying to produce in the Jewish people a conditioned response? He was trying to teach them that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. So when John the Baptist pointed his finger at the Lord Jesus Christ in John 1:29 and said, “Look! The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!” The Jewish people should have said, “Wow! We did it! We understand what God has been doing through the centuries. We no longer have to kill lambs and rams and bulls. This is the Lamb of God!” but they didn’t get it—they missed it. Jesus Christ was the perfect fulfillment of the blood requirement for atonement in the Old Testament. That’s the lesson we learn from the Passover.

III. THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE

There’s one final thing I want you to see, the response of the people. The Israelites responded one way and the Egyptians responded another.

Exodus 12:21-24. “Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, ‘Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning. When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down. Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.’”

What was the response of the Israelites? Trust and obey! Trust and obey! They believed the word of God and they believed it so precisely they were willing to obey. Can I say again that the only parts of this book that you and I believe are the parts of it that we obey the parts of it that we practice. It sounds so good. It sounds so pious for us to say, "I believe all the Bible." but it's only the parts of it that we do that we can claim to really believe.

I want you to see what happened on that evening. First of all, it was the blood that made them safe from judgement, but it was the word that made them sure. There's a point I want to make there. It was the blood of the lamb that made them safe, but it was the word of God that made them sure of their safety. Let's push the rewind button over several millennia and go back to that evening in the land of Egypt. Here is a father of a family who has just gotten the instructions from an elder. He has a little boy about 12 years old and he says, "Son, this is what God told Moses to do and Moses told the elders to tell us to do it now this is what we are going to do, son. Son, tonight a death angel is going to pass over all the land of Egypt and the firstborn of every family is going to be put to death unless we kill this lamb and we take the blood of this lamb and we put it on the doorposts and then go in under that blood and we eat the lamb tonight." The little boy's eyes get big and he says, "But, Daddy, I'm the firstborn. I'm the oldest in our family. Daddy, let's do it!" They do exactly what God says to do exactly the way God says to do it and that evening after the blood has been put on the doorposts, that family enters in and they are there in their home that evening and they are eating that roasted lamb. I can just imagine that little 12-year-old boy sitting there biting his fingernails. "Oh, no. What's going to happen? What's going to happen? Oh, no am I safe? Am I safe?" The father says, "Son, listen! You are safe! We've done what God said to do so don't worry, son. Don't worry! God has given us his word! Now, son let's just trust God. Let's trust his word." All night long the little boy says, "Oh, no. What's going to happen? What's going to happen?" Finally, he falls into a fitful sleep but then the next morning he wakes up and he looks around and he says, "It worked!"

That poor boy spent a whole night worrying about things he never should have worried about. I have asked a lot of people "Are you a Christian? Are you saved?" They say, "Oh, I hope so! I really hope I go to heaven when I die." There are a lot of people who spend a lot of their lives worrying about whether or not they are really saved. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that has made you safe from his judgement but it is his word that makes you sure! Are you a "know so" Christian? Or are you a Christian and you say, "I hope so." That's not good enough. Are you an "I think so" Christian? That's not good enough. Are you a "I know so!" Christian? I know by the word of God that I am saved and I am SURE of my salvation! Can you say that today? If any of you here tonight can't say, "I am saved and I am SURE that I am saved!" then you are missing out on something. You are spending needless hours, and days, and months worrying because it's the blood of Jesus that has made you safe, but it's the word of God that makes you SURE!

Here's the other thing that happened that night. Whereas the Israelites were characterized by trusting God and obeying God, how do we describe what happened that night for the Egyptians? Sin and sorrow! You say, "Pastor, I really have a hard time with a God that would send death into every Egyptian home that didn't do what God said. I can understand it happening to Pharaoh because God had warned Pharaoh ten times but to every home?" Sin is not just doing wicked things. Sin is refusing to do the good things God tells you to do. The sin that every Egyptian who

experienced judgement that night committed was the sin of simply not obeying God! In one of the first churches I pastored we had an old, godly deacon. Everybody called him, "Brother John" because his name was John. When Brother John prayed, there were two things about his prayer I always liked to hear him say. When he would end the prayer, he always said, "In Jesus-es name!" I like the way he would always say that. But he would always say, "Lord, forgive us our sins. Forgive us our sins of *commission*, and forgive us our sins of *omission*. The sin the Egyptians committed that evening was the sin of *omitting* obedience. They just didn't do what God said.

I believe with all my heart had there been any Egyptian family that had identified with God and with his people and sacrificed a lamb and put the blood on the doorposts and lentil of their door gone in and done what God said, then I don't think judgement would have visited their home. By the same token, I don't believe that every Israelite did exactly what God said. Here's an Egyptian who says, "Well, I heard what God said, but you know that blood stuff I don't really believe in that blood stuff the blood of the Lamb stuff. I don't believe that. What I'm going to do is I'm just going to take a nice little lamb and tie it to my doorposts because I don't like shedding blood." There are people today who don't like the gospel of "the blood of Jesus Christ." There are denominations that have taken "blood" out of the hymnals and "blood" out of their doctrine because they don't like "blood." God said, "When I see the blood, I'll pass over you." He didn't say, "When I see a lamb, I will pass over you." Here's somebody else who says, "The shedding of blood is not very cultural. I know what I'll do. I'll write some poetry and pin that poetry to the doorposts of my door and surely God will accept my poetry if I am sincere about this." No! God didn't say, "When I see the poetry, I will pass over you." He said, "When I see the *blood*, I will pass over you." For every Egyptian home where the blood of the lamb was not applied, the judgement of God visited that night. In every human heart where the blood of the Lamb has not been applied, the judgement of God will one day visit. But it doesn't have to, because that's why God sent his son, Jesus Christ, the blessed Lamb of God, to die in our place so our sins could be forgiven. That's what Jesus is. Jesus is the most wonderful example and fulfillment of the Passover Lamb.

CONCLUSION

I am told there is a church in Norway called "The Church of the Lamb," because at the pinnacle of the steeple of this old, wooden church there is a beautiful carving of a singular, solitary lamb! It is said that many, many years ago when workmen were building this wooden cathedral, a workman was laboring up at the very top of that steeple when he suddenly slipped and lost his balance. He fell hundreds of feet to the street below. But at the very moment he fell, going through the narrow streets of that little town was a flock of sheep, and he fell on the back of one of those sheep. That lamb broke his fall and he was hardly injured, but in the process the lamb was smashed and died. As a tribute to that one lamb, the workmen carved a lamb into the steeple of that church and it's called, "The Church of the Lamb." What a beautiful picture of what Jesus did for us, because it says in Isaiah 53:5b, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." When God took my sin and your sin and placed it on the Lord Jesus Christ, it crushed him to death, but you and I can live eternally, because the Lamb has taken our punishment!

OUTLINE

I. THE REFUSAL OF PHARAOH

II. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PASSOVER

Requirements for the Passover lamb:

1. Prime age
2. No defect
3. Slain at twilight
4. The blood must be applied
5. Must be eaten with anticipation

III. THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE