

Passover, our subject for last week, is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was a weeklong feast in which leaven was removed and not used in the making of bread. Our chapter today deals with three issues: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, redemption of the firstborn males, and the Presence of God that led them in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. Each of these is a picture of spiritual issues, and each has much to say to us today.

First, lets look at redemption of the firstborn males. Though the final plague did not say that it was only the firstborn males that died, I assume that is the case because of the description of the redemption of the firstborn in Israel is only that of the males. The firstborn male had the right of inheritance. He was to lead the family after the father died. The firstborn male represents the whole family.

Jewish men were to explain to their children the sacrifice of the firstborn animals in this way: *15 For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.* It is as if God had said, "All firstborn males should have died. The blood of the lamb on the door caused me to pass over you, but you are as guilty as the Egyptians. You worship false gods. You have doubted my word. So I am claiming all firstborn males as mine." (Numbers 3:13) It reminded them that every family belongs to the Lord for His service.

**Commented [Paul Wall1]:** Numbers 3:13 (ESV) 13 for all the firstborn are mine. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the firstborn in Israel, both of man and of beast. They shall be mine: I am the LORD."

The Hebrews were to sacrifice every firstborn male animal to the Lord to remind them of when God spared their firstborn. A donkey could be redeemed with a lamb. When a calf or lamb was eight days old, it was to be given to the Lord. (Exodus 22:30) A male child could be redeemed with five silver shekels. (Numbers 18:16)

**Commented [Paul Wall2]:** Exodus 22:30 (ESV) 30 You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall be with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to me.

A short time later, the Lord swapped the firstborn males for the whole tribe of Levi. An accounting showed there were more Israelite firstborn males than Levites so the balance redemption price was paid on the surplus males that were not of Levi. (Numbers 3:36-48) *14 Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the people of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine. 15 And after that the Levites shall go in to serve at the tent of meeting, when you have cleansed them and offered them as a wave offering.*

**Commented [Paul Wall3]:** Numbers 18:16 (ESV) 16 And their redemption price (at a month old you shall redeem them) you shall fix at five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

To redeem means to buy back. These firstborn male animals God claimed as His own, just as He did the firstborn boys. They were set apart for God, consecrated, holy. You could buy back the donkey, or other unclean animals, but the clean animals, the sheep or ox were to be sacrificed to the Lord. When you raise an

**Commented [Paul Wall4]:** Numbers 3:46-48 (ESV) 46 And as the redemption price for the 273 of the firstborn of the people of Israel, over and above the number of the male Levites, 47 you shall take five shekels per head; you shall take them according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel of twenty gerahs ), 48 and give the money to Aaron and his sons as the redemption price for those who are over."

animal, that firstborn that comes along is special. It is precious to you. The children would naturally ask why it must be sacrificed? That was the time you remembered what happened in Egypt, the mighty power and justice of God. A father could tell his child the whole story, reminding them that they were a chosen people, redeemed by God.

In Luke chapter 2, Mary was offering the sacrifice of the poor to redeem Jesus, her firstborn child. (Luke 2:23) That is when Simeon and Anna gave the prophecies over Jesus concerning the role He was to fulfill in the saving of mankind. (Luke 2:30-32)

**Commented [Paul Wall5]:** Luke 2:23 (ESV)  
23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")

If you've been with us on Wednesday nights you have seen how the line of Messiah went from Eve through the Patriarchs, through Judah, and through David. Another piece of the Messiah puzzle is that He had to be a firstborn male for the firstborn male is holy to the Lord. That matches the Hebrew wordage in Genesis 3 that first predicts the coming Messiah points to a male child born of a woman. (Genesis 3:15)

**Commented [Paul Wall6]:** Luke 2:30-32 (ESV)  
30 for my eyes have seen your salvation  
31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

That is why in the days of Jesus the Jews had careful records of the descendents of David. Women in that lineage were praying that they would be the one to be the mother of Messiah. They hoped their first child would be a male.

**Commented [Paul Wall7]:** Genesis 3:15 (ESV)  
15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Redemption of the firstborn males is still a religious ceremony performed by Orthodox and Conservative Jews. It is called **Pidyon ha Ben**. A special silver coin was minted by Israel so that 5 of them would total the prescribed amount (117 gr.). Incidentally, the silver dollars before 1936 also contained sufficient silver so that 5 of them amounted to a little more than the redemption weight in silver. The Kohens and Levites do not redeem their firstborn males as they are the Lord's and are to be available to serve in the coming Temple. (Numbers 3:45)

**Commented [Paul Wall8]:** Numbers 3:45 (ESV)  
45 "Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle. The Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD.

So the redemption of the firstborn was to remind each generation of the great deliverance of their ancestors as it does even to this day. It was to point to the fact that the blood of the lambs did cause God to Passover them, and yet they still needed to be redeemed. It also reminds them that every family is the Lord's.

Ultimately the sacredness of the firstborn points to the fulfillment of the first promise of a Savior. He is the male seed of Eve that would crush the head of the serpent and provide complete redemption for all who will receive it. It is redemption not from sacred service, as is thought today, but rather to it.

Now we move to **the Feast of Unleavened Bread**. In the ancient world, each family kept a small batch of dough that had risen in a damp cloth. It would be used to transfer the yeast to a new batch of dough. After the new batch had

risen a small portion would be taken and kept for the next batch. The yeast in your bread that day may have come down from many generations earlier.

Last week we saw that yeast was a picture of the old nature we inherited from Adam. (1Corinthians 5:8) It infects each new generation and puffs them up, which is a picture of the chief sin, pride.

Sin is passed down not only in our very nature inherited from our parents, but in the patterns of life that we learned from them. (1Corinthians 15:22) Many men have learned to deal with stress by becoming angry. That is how their father reacted to frustration, and we learn how to react to life by watching how our parents deal with life. (Exodus 34:7)

If we had a promiscuous parent, we think the solution to difficulty in marriage is divorce or another relationship. The patterns move from parent to child to grandchild. Some call them generational curses. (Deuteronomy 28:18) Those patterns are very hard to break.

The Hebrews had developed some very evil patterns in Egypt. We will see them as they journey in the wilderness. They developed a pattern of complaining about their situations. (Numbers 14:29) They incorporated the worship of the Egyptian gods. (Joshua 24:14) They developed a taste for certain foods and looked to them as a source of soul satisfaction. (Numbers 11:5)

What does all this have to do with unleavened bread? That which had been passed down from generation to generation that puffed up but did not increase the substance needed to be cleansed from their homes. Each home was responsible to see that the leaven was out of their home before they started this new beginning. (2Corinthians 5:17)

The picture is very clear. As believers in Jesus, we come out of the bondage of sin and are delivered from worldliness. We must be sure our households are free of sin. The old patterns must be broken. The compromises with evil must end. What was once acceptable is no more.

*<sup>8</sup> You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.'* When your children ask you why you don't do things that the world does, when they don't understand the restrictions you put on their lives, you have a chance to tell them that you live your life in gratitude to the One who redeemed you and gave you a new life. You can tell them how sin enslaved you and was destroying you and how Jesus became the blood stained door through which you entered and were saved. You can tell them how death has passed over you, for you have been given eternal life. You can tell them how God showed you the gods you once worshiped were powerless to help you and

**Commented [Paul Wall9]:** 1 Corinthians 5:8 (ESV)  
8 Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

**Commented [Paul Wall10]:** 1 Corinthians 15:22 (ESV)  
22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

**Commented [Paul Wall11]:** Exodus 34:7 (ESV)  
7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

**Commented [Paul Wall12]:** Deuteronomy 28:18 (ESV)  
18 Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock.

**Commented [Paul Wall13]:** Numbers 14:29 (ESV)  
29 your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me,

**Commented [Paul Wall14]:** Joshua 24:14 (ESV)  
14 "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

**Commented [Paul Wall15]:** Numbers 11:4-5 (ESV)  
4 Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "Oh that we had meat to eat!  
5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.

**Commented [Paul Wall16]:** 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)  
17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

were really a curse. Imagine the impact on your children when you spell out your redemption to them. (1Peter 3:15)

*<sup>9</sup> And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt.* Your salvation was no less a miracle than that of the Israelites. Your testimony should be always with you. Scholars argue whether or not this was to be a physical object like the phylacteries (Matthew 23:5) we read about in the New Testament or if the word is metaphorical. Either way, we are told to remember so that God's word will be in our mouth. It is to be in our minds and in our actions for we have been set free by God's strong hand.

Today we know the strong arm of the Lord is Jesus. (Isaiah 53:1) We know that our deliverance is from something far more oppressive than Egypt and Pharaoh ever were. We were in a greater bondage and our deliverance came at a greater price than the firstborn of Egypt. It came at the price of God's only begotten Son. (Galatians 3:13) How much more then should our actions show it (sign upon our hand). How much more should our minds be filled with it (a memorial between our eyes), so that His word might be in our mouth? It was with a strong hand (Jesus) that God brought us out of the worldliness that once controlled our life.

Some of us had such dramatic conversions that this concept is very clear. Even if you grew up in a Christian home and can't remember the day you placed your faith in Jesus, the deliverance is just as powerful. It was still the strong arm of the Lord (Jesus) that paid for the sin nature you inherited. It is still the power of the Holy Spirit that enables you to sweep the leaven from your home. There is still the need for you to remember the great price that was paid so that it might be in your actions and on your mind and in your words.

If you've lost the sense of this great deliverance, I want to ask you to get alone with the Lord and ask Him where you would be if it wasn't for His mercy and grace. I'll say again, that God chose to have some of us grow up in the USA in a Christian home and forced to go to church as children because He knew we were so weak we would never have made it in any other place or age. (Acts 17:26) He chose this time and place because it's the only way we would have come to Him. The great deliverance also includes time and circumstance.

Thank God you are His. Everyday praise Him for your salvation! Get a renewed sense of what it cost and how much God loves you to pay that price. Then you'll want to be sure your home is swept clean of the leaven of sin. Then you'll want to tell your children when they ask why you live the way you do.

**Commented [Paul Wall17]:** 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV) 15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;

**Commented [Paul Wall18]:** Matthew 23:5 (ESV) 5 They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long,

**Commented [Paul Wall19]:** Isaiah 53:1 (ESV) 1 Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

**Commented [Paul Wall20]:** Galatians 3:13 (ESV) 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—

**Commented [Paul Wall21]:** Acts 17:26 (ESV) 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

Remember you were redeemed. Remember that sin is supposed to be purged from your home. This was to be a lasting festival because we forget. I think we'll even be doing it in heaven to keep refreshing in mind and heart what God has done for us. (Zechariah 14:16)

**Commented [Paul Wall22]:** Zechariah 14:16 (ESV)  
16 Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.

Finally, God led them. <sup>17</sup> *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt."* If they had gone north along the Via Maris, what was then the Way of Horus, there were numerous Egyptian military outposts. It would have only taken a few short weeks to go that route. But God knew their hearts. He had to prepare them for what they would face. There were lessons to be learned.

<sup>19</sup> *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here."* How did Joseph know? The prophetic words to his great-grandfather Abraham had been passed down. (Genesis 15:16) They knew it would be 400 years before they left Egypt, but Joseph showed faith in the prophecy by asking them to take his bones with them to the Promised Land. God made a covenant with his forefathers to give them the land of Canaan. Joseph knew God was faithful to keep His word. I wonder if his command was as much to remind the people of the promise as it was to see his bones buried with his ancestors?

**Commented [Paul Wall23]:** Genesis 15:16 (ESV)  
16 And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

I want you to picture this huge crowd coming out of Egypt, overflowing the roads. There would have been herds and carts loaded with family possessions. The elderly and small children probably road on animals and carts while the rest walked. The men were probably armed and took positions on the perimeter.

There before them rose a giant column of cloud. They were no longer just following Moses. Now they had a visible manifestation of the presence of God going before them.

<sup>21</sup> *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.*

<sup>22</sup> *The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.* That first evening as the sky began to darken that great column became ablaze and lit the night sky. What a nightlight! The Lord Himself! The psalmist tells us that cloud shaded them from the sun during the heat of the day. (Psalm 105:39)

**Commented [Paul Wall24]:** Psalms 105:39 (ESV)  
39 He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light by night.

The lesson is clear in this last point as well. **God must guide us!** If we are ever to make it to our Promised Land of heaven, we must follow His lead. We don't have a cloud to follow, we have something even better, the Word of God and the

indwelling Holy Spirit. (John 16:7) He guides us in the details of life, teaching us what to say and how to say it. (John 12:49) He guides where we go and what we do. He has become the Word on our hand and on our foreheads.

Let's review the lessons. The firstborn was to be redeemed. Never forget you are redeemed. Remember what Jesus did for you. It is your testimony! Tell your children.

Get rid of the leaven. Sin must go! If you are going to start a new life, sin must be purged, not just from your life, but from your entire home. Remember, it is our grateful response for our redemption.

And lastly, His presence will guide you. If you got the first two points, you know the need for the third. We can't go back to following our old desires. We must let God lead us all the way to the Promised Land. We are redeemed to be sanctified to follow where God leads. That is the record of what God did for them, and it foreshadowed what God is doing for you today. Remember, you were redeemed to serve, so get rid of sin, and follow where God leads. Three simple lessons, rich in significance, that we are to remember and pass on to our children. Have you? Will you?

Questions:

- 1 Why does God claim the firstborn? Implications?
- 2 What is the connection with Jesus?
- 3 What is Pidyon ha Ben?
- 4 What is the source of sin in our lives?
- 5 What patterns of sin had the Hebrews developed?
- 6 How does God describe how important these points should be to us?
- 7 How were you redeemed?
- 8 Are you ready to tell the story?
- 9 How were they led? Application?
- 10 What was the cloud?

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**Commented [Paul Wall25]:** John 16:7 (ESV)  
7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

**Commented [Paul Wall26]:** John 12:49 (ESV)  
49 For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.