*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 6 - 11

*Exodus Chapters Eleven and Twelve*

**Monday, July 6 Exodus 11:1-10**

*“The firstborn of Egypt will die”*

 With the tenth plague we have arrived at the climax of the plague account. The announcement of this plague should be read in light of 4:21-25, where God had previously told Moses what would ultimately happen to Egypt. Calling Israel his firstborn son, God had declared that the punishment for refusing to let his firstborn son go would be the killing of the firstborn of Egypt. This mighty act of God will finally result in the Israelites’ departure from Egypt, which is the goal toward which the plagues have been leading.

 The death of the Egyptian firstborn also takes us back to the first chapter of Exodus. There, Pharaoh killed the children of the Israelites. That action has been judged by God and the consequence is the death of the children of the Egyptians, even the death of “the firstborn son of the slave girl,” just as the children of the Hebrew slaves were killed. God will make no distinction among the Egyptians, and his action will be so thorough and devastating that the Egyptians will beg the Israelites to leave.

*Those who do evil, Lord, will not escape judgment of their actions. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 7 Exodus 12:1-27**

*“The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread”*

 The drama of the departure from Egypt gives way to what seems like an interruption in the story. But, this institution of a powerful, everlasting observance whereby God’s love for his people Israel will be remembered – indeed, reenacted – is integral to our understanding of God’s purpose in redeeming his people.

 As the Passover was to be a lasting representation of God’s deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt, the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples is to be a lasting representation of God’s final act of deliverance from the bondage of sin. There is no lamb at this meal, however, for Christ is the Lamb. Rather, this meal consists of bread and wine, which represent the body and blood of Christ, the new Lamb. Now that the final Passover Lamb has come, a new meal with new elements is in order. Moreover, this last meal points not only to the imminent sacrifice of the Lamb of God, but to a future meal, an end-time banquet that will celebrate the final victory of the sacrificed and risen Lamb.

*You are the Lamb of God, Lord, who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 8 Exodus 12:28-33**

*“Go!”*

 The lengthy and detailed account of the regulations for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread gives way to the telling of the departure from Egypt. Having done all that God told them to do, the people of Israel await God’s action. Will he do what he has promised and deliver them from bondage? Yes, he will. As with the accounts of the other plagues, we are told that God’s word is made good. The loud wailing heard throughout Egypt prompts Pharaoh, once again, to call for Israel’s release. He has done so before, but here there is a new sense of urgency, for he calls to them at night, right then and there, without a moment to lose, saying as it were: “Just get out! Take what you want, but just get out.”

 This is total capitulation on Pharaoh’s part. Even the people urge the Israelites to leave at once, which they do. The Israelites march out of Egypt through the front door, so to speak, with dignity – not like dogs crawling through the back fence. The exalted departure of God’s people is yet another humiliation for Egypt.

*You promised deliverance, Lord, and you always do what you promise. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 6 - 11

*Exodus Chapters Eleven and Twelve*

**Thursday, July 9 Exodus 12:34-42**

*“The people of Israel did as Moses had instructed”*

 This section emphasizes the importance of the people having done precisely what they were instructed to do. First, there is the bread made without yeast that Israel carries with her as she leaves Egypt. God wanted his people to be ready to move as soon as Pharaoh released them, and bread without yeast is ready whenever you need it – as opposed to bread made with yeast which must be given time to rise. Second, there is the asking of the Egyptians for clothing and articles of silver and gold. The material gain of the Israelites is at least a symbolic compensation for their years of slavery.

 In the New Testament, Paul uses the imagery of Israel’s obedience to encourage ours: “Get rid of the old yeast [sin] that you may be a new batch without yeast – as you really are. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the Festival [the Lord’s Supper], not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and bitterness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

*We live our best lives with each other, Lord, when we live in obedience to you. Amen.*

**Friday, July 10 Exodus 12:43-51**

*“Instructions for the festival of Passover”*

 These additional instructions for the Passover celebration are interwoven with the story of the Exodus from Egypt, once again showing that as the Israelites leave slavery behind they are moving into a new kind of relationship with their God, a relationship illustrated and strengthened by new rituals such as the Passover.

 The regulations concerning foreigners seem to reflect the fact that non-Israelites left Egypt along with the Israelites. Non-Israelites are not excluded from the Passover meal simply on the basis of their ethnicity. They must, however, like Israelites, put themselves under the sign of the covenant (i.e., circumcision) in order to participate. We have here a mixture of exclusion and inclusion, revealing the broader purpose of God. Although God had made a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians, those who are willing may nevertheless partake of this holy celebration and be included in the family of faith. This invitation of non-Israelites is reflected in the New Testament ministry of Jews like Paul who are called to minister to the Gentiles.

*Your death on the cross, Lord, was for all people. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 11 Exodus 13:1-16**

 *“Dedication of the firstborn”*

 After they enter the Promised Land, they must be careful to consecrate to God the firstborn of every womb in Israel, whether human or animal. We should understand this ritual in light of the tenth plague itself: Israel as God’s son was redeemed (delivered from Egypt) by the death of Egypt’s firstborn sons. There is also a parallel between the tenth plague and the mention of the donkey in verse 13. Rather than being sacrificed itself, a donkey is to be redeemed (replaced) with the sacrifice of a lamb, just as Israel was redeemed (replaced) with the blood of a lamb.

 The point is that the firstborn of every womb belongs to God, but in the case of the Israelites he will not claim his right fully; a substitute will take their place. These ceremonies serve as a graphic reminder of the lengths God will go to save his children – his firstborn son, Israel. We see, then, a hint of what becomes clearer almost fifteen hundred years later on a cross near Jerusalem: Life comes from death, or better, life can *only* come from death. The once-for-all-substitutionary death of the beloved firstborn Son of gives us life.

*Because you were willing to die for me, Lord, eternal life has come to me. Amen.*