



2025 Weekly Devotions

Week of: December 8th - 14th

Sermon: December 7th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community • equipping believers • serving Jesus

December 8

Exodus 12:1-2 & 1 2 Corinthians 5:17

The first few verses of Exodus 12 show us that God was intent on transforming the way of life of the nation of Israel. From the point of the Passover forward, God commands that the very calendar of the Jews should begin on the date of the Passover. Why would God give this order? The answer is that God was utilizing this moment in history as foundational for their new life as His covenant community and an independent nation. While Israel, in seed form, existed before this moment, in a very real sense, the Passover was the time that the people were both liberated from oppression and born as a real nation under God.

The point here is that Israel, as the nation we come to know, was to be born on the day of their liberation. Herschel Hobbs writes, "These verses, especially verse 2, emphasize the Passover as providing a new beginning for Israel." The Jews were preparing to be freed from oppression for the purpose of glorifying the Lord their God and, by virtue of their God-given freedom, they were subsequently called to follow Him by obeying His law (given in Exodus 20 and following) all the while trusting Him to conquer all of the obstacles and enemies that stood in the way of their journey to the land of promise that awaited them in the future.

Israel was to remember this day of Passover because it was evidence both of God's power to save and their identity as chosen objects of God's grace but this act did not constitute the pinnacle of God's saving work. Instead, there is a great foreshadowing here of what God would do for us in Christ. He would give us life by delivering us from the tyranny of a greater enemy than Pharaoh. Jesus came to live and die in order for God's judgment to pass us over and, just as importantly, to liberate us from the power and grip of Satan and sin.

While the physical calendar does not change upon our conversion, our lives are to be reoriented around this act of liberation. We are to think in terms of the day of our salvation and, therefore, new creation. Like the Israelites, Christians are freed and formed into a great nation, a holy priesthood, and we have a greater Exodus to credit for our freedom!

Folks, when you have been set free by Christ, when you are a "new creation" by God's grace, everything in your life revolves around this one act. His work of redemption is meant to be on your mind, His grace in salvation is meant to garner your worship and His power to overcome and overwhelm all of our foes is meant to draw out our faith.

Is your salvation this central to your life? Do you think about His work of redemption often? Do you commemorate and celebrate the fact that Jesus has set you, the captive, free? If so, then God's instructions to the Jews here make good sense to you! Praise God that the words of the Apostle Paul are true for those who are in Christ today, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

December 9

Deuteronomy 5:32-33 & Luke 11:28

It is interesting to me how detailed God was in giving instructions to His people regarding their preparation for the Passover. There are instructions given for the selection of the animal (age, kind) the duration of the selection process (beginning on the 10th day of the month and continuing through 14th), the timing of the slaughtering of the animal, the application and location of the blood on each home and the menu for the celebration amongst other things.

Some people may be tempted to read instructions like this and wonder why it all matters. What difference did it make if the animal selected was 1 year old as opposed to an older or younger lamb or goat? Why did the blood need to be applied in just the right locations? These are questions that might come to mind but they are not given an answer. The simple reading of the passage reminds us that God gives clear instructions and His expectation is that His people follow them... down to the very finite details and this is true even when He doesn't provide us a reason!

God is consistent in this regard. Today's two passages are meant to demonstrate the truth that God expects obedience. I selected a passage from both testaments in order to demonstrate the pervasive nature of the Lord's expectation of our obedience. As such, these reminders are valuable for us as followers. The Lord has not given us the responsibility of plotting the course or making the rules, instead He has assigned us tasks to complete and given us ample instructions for our obedience to His decree.

It strikes me that some of us are not happy with clear revelation. I have met many people (some who claim Christ and others who don't) who seem to think that they need to be able to understand why God commands something in order to comply. While it is certainly true that God often gives us His reasoning, passages like today remind us that they are not required for us. Whereas there were undoubtedly many questions about the purpose behind some of God's directives, there was no choice to make but faithfulness.

I suppose my point today is rather simple... some of us need to stop attempting to discern God's mind (particularly in His hidden will) and devote ourselves instead to honoring His revealed will. The blessings that flowed from the Passover were so incredibly profound that men would have struggled to believe all that God would reveal but those blessings only flowed to the men and women who followed God's commands ahead of time. In the same way, we will never fully know all that God has in store for those who believe ahead of time but those who honor the Lord have every reason to believe that He will do great things in and through their adherence to His instructions.

December 10

Ephesians 1:7

Frankly, as I sit to write this devotion I am still a bit unsure as to the direction that the sermon will take on Sunday. What I do know, however, is that the theme of this devotion will also be central to our study on the Lord's Day. The reason for this conviction is simple... today's devotion deals with the very heart of the Gospel as prefigured in the Passover.

Exodus 12 records God's Words as speaks to the Jews saying, "The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you, when I see the blood, I will pass over you..." Now, some might wonder why God would even threaten judgment! After all, these are His people, right? Why would the Israelites need to spread blood on the doorposts of their homes? The answer, of course, is that God's judgment requires justice for all those who would break His holy law. The difference between the Egyptians and the Jews was not merit. The Israelites were just as guilty of sin before God as any other group of people! The distinction that was made between the Egyptians and the Jews was one of grace.

God offered to Passover the Jews because of His underserved, covenantal love for them. He had chosen Abraham and Abraham's descendants freely in order to demonstrate His gracious affection and devotion to an undeserving people. Nevertheless, there must be judgment for their sin. How could God be both just in punishing sin and the justifier in continuing in counting such unrighteous people holy?

The answer is ultimately not the death of a lamb or goat. Hebrews reminds us that these sacrifices were insufficient to atone for our sin. The answer, of course, is that the lamb prefigured the One who would come to atone for the sins of God's people and cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

Like the Jews, we too are guilty of the same sin as the pagan unbelievers that surround us. We are just as deserving of God's judgment as any other man that walks on this planet but God, in His mercy and faithfulness, has provided a substitute that shields us from judgment. Christ died (like the Passover lamb) so that we would not have to die for all eternity and we are saved by His death as we apply His blood, through faith, to our own souls. When the Lord looks upon our souls, covered by that blood, He passes over us in grace and mercy!

This is what Paul is driving at in Ephesians 1:7. It is in Christ that we are redeemed "through His blood". Jesus' blood was shed to atone for our sins, He died to pay for our wrongdoing! He spilled His blood so that ours could be saved and this is because of God's grace! Dear friend, there is no other way to be passed over. God will either require your blood of you or graciously accept Jesus' blood for you. Have you believed upon Him today? If so, then trust that His blood covers you and, therefore, there is now no condemnation to come.

December 11

Proverbs 1:33

I had an experience in the grocery store the other day that grieved me. As I was walking through the aisles, there was a younger mother and her child (preschool age perhaps) crossing my path at various times. The child was hyper and also very indifferent to his mother's instructions. Time and again I heard the mom make threats that were not fulfilled. The child was threatened that spankings were coming, that phones would be taken away and that they would leave if he could not get things together and yet, sadly, none of those warnings were actually fulfilled.

I say that this grieved me because it is instilling something in a young person that is, frankly, quite destructive! When we are brought up to believe that warnings of consequences don't actually materialize, we are careening towards a day of great consequence. This is true in our physical world and it is certainly true in our relationship with God.

The Lord had warned Pharaoh, over and over again, about impending consequences of his stubborn rebellion and the Lord also told the Israelites about His plan. He told them what to do to prepare, He gave them instructions to escape His judgment and He expected that they would heed His Divine guidance.

Proverbs 1:33 tells us that it is those who listen to God that will be secure. We should listen to God in all respects, meaning we should honor Him and take Him at His Word. He is faithful to do all the good that He promises but He also will not be mocked. The threats that He makes and the warnings that He provides are not meant to be disregarded like that child in the grocery store. Instead, they are meant to be internalized and believed!

Folks, God has given us many warnings in Scripture. He has warned us that death is sure and judgment is to follow. He has warned us that those who refuse to believe upon Christ will not be spared. He has warned us that our own intuitions and plans lead to death while His ways lead to life. He has warned us against following in the ways of the world. In all of these things, we have a decision to make, will we honor Him and trust Him and confess His wisdom or will we seek our own way? The answer will dictate so much about the life we live.

There is no greater tragedy than seeing someone disregard the clear revelation of God. The result is always peril and suffering. Conversely, there is no wiser course of action than to heed God's Word and live in light of His decree. When we do such things, we are blessed and secure. The difference is typified by the varied outcomes in Exodus 12. The Egyptians suffered because of the rebellion of Pharaoh and the Jews were spared because of their faithfulness to do all that God had commanded.

December 12

Isaiah 60:22

The story of God's Providence during the time of Israel's stay in Egypt is astounding. Last year, we studied the beginning of the Jews' time in Egypt as we walked through the closing chapters in Genesis. You'll recall that Jacob's family made their way to Egypt by virtue of Joseph's presence (brought on by his brother's sin and, most importantly, God's Providence) and a severe famine. Exodus 12:40 tells us that over 400 years passed from the moment of their entry in Genesis to their Exodus after the Passover.

400 years is a great amount of time! There were numerous generations of Israelites who were born and died in Egypt. They established lives and had a profound history on that foreign soil and yet, from the beginning, we know that God had made promises to bring them back to the land that he initially swore to their forebearers.

Biblical timelines are always interesting to me, especially when I take the time to consider what it would be like to dwell within the timeframe mentioned! 400 plus years is a lot of time but we can miss this fact if we don't take the time to think about it and place ourselves in the shoes of those who were living in that redemptive moment.

Do you think that there were people who lived and died wondering what God was doing? Do you think there were people who felt abandoned, forgotten or forsaken? I would surmise that many knew that they were not intended to live in this locality and yet they found themselves... year by year, living amongst another nation on foreign land!

The timeline in Exodus reminds us that God's timing is both perfect and, often, not our own! I would imagine that many people would have voted to expedite the process but once everything played out, it was apparent that God was preparing a miracle as He raised up and defeated Pharaoh before their very eyes.

Whereas it is neat to consider what God did, my goal in writing this devotion is to remind you that He is still working! Some of you are wondering when the Lord's faithfulness will materialize. You trust Him but you long for the day of redemption and, in so doing, you are desperately waiting for your own Exodus out of whatever circumstance troubles you. If that is you today, be reminded of the truth of Isaiah 60:22, God will accomplish His plans in His timing. Sometimes, faith requires us to simply wait. We must trust that God's plan is best, that He is faithful and that He is doing something, even when we cannot see it! Part of the reason for stories like that of the Exodus is grounded in this truth. God's plan might seem to unfold slowly, but it is always on time and His people are always blessed when it comes to fruition.

December 13

Psalm 86:9

We have attempted to emphasize the truth that the redemptive story of the Bible is progressive in nature. By this we mean that the story makes “progress” in that God’s design to save the world moves forward throughout the biblical story. This progress transcends the testamental divide. All the way back in Genesis, we begin to learn of God’s plan to redeem the world and it begins with one guy... Abraham. Through Abraham’s offspring, the clan of Jacob would make its way to Egypt and now, in Exodus 12, that clan has expanded to become a nation.

The Old Testament continues to tell the story of this nation but there are hints that God’s desire to bless all nations through the Israelites was already beginning to take place. One piece of evidence that substantiates this larger design is found in Exodus 12:48 which states, “if an alien (meaning a Gentile or non-Jew) resides among you and wants to observe the Lord’s Passover, every male in his household must be circumcised and then he may participate.”

God was already welcoming the sojourner into His covenantal family! Years later, the Psalmist would tell God’s people that the ultimate goal of God’s redemptive work was the worship of the nations. Notice that this is not just “some” of the nations, instead the Psalm tells us that “all” the nations of the world would come together to worship the Lord. What began in seed form in Exodus was intended by God to grow into multitudes. In many ways, this story is just another stream of the same progressive story of Israel’s history from one (Abraham) to multitudes.

What is perhaps most interesting to me is that you and I, as believers in Christ, are now commanded by God to be instrumental in bringing this plan to fruition. When Christ ascended, He clearly commanded all of His followers to be His “witnesses” (Acts 1:8) and it was through this witness that people from every tribe tongue and nation would come to know Him. The fruit of this worldwide effort will be realized on the final day when people from every corner of the globe will fall in worship at the feet of their Redeemer.

Tomorrow, when you gather to worship, you are practicing for the future and, prayerfully, participating in a body that will reap a harvest that will be ultimately realized on the final day of redemption. In our little sliver of the globe, you and I are blessed to see God move amongst (mostly) Gentiles as the welcoming heart of God continues to usher more and more “aliens” into God’s family. I celebrate the fact that He took you and me into His family and I look forward to the Lord’s Day so we can worship Him for all that He has done for us!

December 14

Jonah 2:9

Our final devotion will be dedicated to the final verse of Exodus 12 which states, "On that same day the Lord brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt..." The record of God's liberating the Jews was very clear in regards to who should receive credit for their freedom. You will notice that it is God, and God alone, who is given the glory for the accomplishment.

While it is true that Moses and Aaron were faithful, it was abundantly clear to all who observed the events in question that God alone provided the power for the salvation of His people. God gave the Words to speak, God brought the plagues to bear, God hardened Pharaoh's heart and God parted the Red Sea. Unlike many in our world today, there were no illusions in Israel as to who it was that moved in saving the Jews.

This story of the Exodus is only one of many examples of God's power to save and His power to save explains Jonah's statement in our text for today where we read that "salvation is of the Lord." The point that Jonah is making is clear... those who are saved are saved because of God's power and wisdom and love alone.

Do you believe this today? I fear that sometimes we place too much confidence and offer undue praise to secondary sources. If you have been brought to Christ, the power and design in your salvation did not lie in a gifted preacher or musician or faithful brother. Although God does use faithful men and women, His might pours through them and without that power, there would be no salvation. The greatest and most gifted servant of all time cannot make the proverbial waters part. The most gifted orator cannot cause your blind eyes to open or your dead heart to breathe. Just like Ezekiel saw in the valley of dry bones, if the dead are to be brought to life, God and God alone must provide His supernatural power.

As you gather to praise the Lord today, remember that He deserves your worship because He has saved you. He came, He lived a righteous life that you could not live, He died a death to pay for sins you could not atone for and He rose again, triumphing over death which is an enemy we had no hope to conquer in our own strength. He chose you, He sought you, He redeemed you, He is sanctifying you and He will glorify you on the last day... if in fact you believe.

These truths should provide us ample reason to worship the Lord. How amazing that God would save us! I pray that you prepare your heart to worship Him today with these truths and as they seep into your soul that your heart erupts with loving adoration. May you sing with gusto today as you confess that God has brought you out from tyranny into freedom.