

Exodus 12 The Passover

Notes:

- I. Introduction
 - a. The Passover story may be the most important section in Exodus because the Exodus experience is experienced both as a historical event and a recurring moment in present time.
 - b. There's a linkage here between past and present. Also, there is a link implied with the future.
 - c. Story and liturgy are woven together.
 - d. In the Passover one experiences both bondage and liberation
- II. The Presentness of Passover
 - a. If we had only the story we would have only history. The addition of bread reminds of oppression and liberation (no time for yeast, manna)
 - b. Parsley dipped in salt water suggests springtime and tears. Bondage and salvation.
 - c. Dress code: dressed for travel with sandals on feet and walking stick ready. Today, celebrants wear hats and coats and travel shoes.
 - d. Casting: actors say: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt and the eternal, our God, brought us out from there."
- III. The Night of Vigil
 - a. Passover is about being in two places at the same time, between bondage and freedom.
 - i. It is eaten at twilight, between two evenings
 - ii. Passover is celebrated in liminal time, in Egypt and out of Egypt at the same time.
 - b. The anxiety of Passover has to do with the death of the firstborn.
 - i. The Destroyer is a situation where the natural order has gone berserk.
 - ii. The night watch is to see if Pharaoh will let the people go.
 - iii. Both Passover and the Lord's Supper have a watch element and both highlight the night before redemption.

The Jewish opposition to Auschwitz cannot be grasped in terms of humanly created ideals, but only as an imposed commandment--an imperative as truly given--was the voice of Sinai. Jews are forbidden to hand Hitler posthumous victories. They are commanded to remember the victims of Auschwitz lest their memory perish. They are forbidden to despair of man and his world, and to escape into either cynicism or otherworldliness.

Discussion Questions
Exodus 11-13

1. Deliverance comes from outside and does not arise from within the slave community. It is something that happens to the people. At Sinai people choose freedom. Comment.
2. Why was it important for the Hebrews to have the silver and gold articles and clothing?
3. Whatever possessed the Egyptians to give them to the slaves?
4. Why does the Pharaoh keep listening to Moses?
5. What is implied about genuine worship in the specificity of detail and the repetition of the Passover instructions?
6. It is difficult to determine whether these chapters are the institution of the Passover or the actual deliverance of Israel. Couldn't the establishment of the ritual have waited until the people had "leisure" time in the wilderness to reflect on what had happened and to concoct a holiday out of it?
7. What is the essential difference between the first Passover and the one celebrated a year later?
8. Reflect on the role of liturgy in liberation. Why must this be so ritualized and established as a holiday?
9. Why aren't all the plagues celebrated and remembered liturgically?
10. We will later learn of elaborate instructions for the construction of the tabernacle and the observance of ritual. What is it about getting the ritual correct that is so important?
11. Is there a ritual element in other forms of deliverance?
12. The spoil taken from the Egyptians ended up as being the material used to construct the Golden Lamb. Often in the Old Testament the possession of contraband is of deep spiritual significance and proves to be problematic for the possessor. Is the Egyptian spoil good stuff or forbidden stuff?
13. What would be the Christian equivalent to the Passover? If the remembrance is supposed to be perpetual, why don't we celebrate it? Should we?
14. An insight that appears repeatedly in the prophetic literature is that God's chastisement is insufficient to nudge Israel out of its unfaithfulness. Only catastrophe is sufficient to jar the people out of their sloth and sin. Where do you see this principle operating in your life? Others' lives? The Christian faith? Do you buy the wisdom of it?
15. The deliverance of Israel became an opportunity for others to exit the house of bondage. Is deliverance "for" other than the Jews? How is this paralleled for us as Christians?
16. Why not include foreigners in the Passover without circumcision?
17. Is the mention of domesticated animals sufficient to support the idea that this signals God's redemption of the whole of Creation, not simply people?

18. The high number of people mentioned in v.37 suggests a community of 2 million. The number was Israel's population in Solomon's day. Why is it important that future generations of Israel feel as if they marched out of Egypt?
19. Is there a connection between this liturgical action and the slaughter of the Egyptian firstborn?
20. Why is it important that the Exodus events be commemorated in such specific ways? Can the memory of events be salvific?