

A Feast, Firstborn & Fire

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Exodus chapter 13.

Exodus chapter 13. I want us to look at the whole chapter, but if we read again from the beginning. Exodus 13 and verse 1. The Lord said to Moses, Then Moses said to the people, Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place.

No leavened bread shall be eaten. And so on. You know, it's often said that introductions are overrated.

Introductions are overrated. And that can sometimes be applied to preachers. I'm not applying it to this preacher here. But sometimes preachers like myself can spend too much time on the introduction of a sermon.

And they spend so much time on the introduction of a sermon that it takes ages to get to the main point of the sermon. But it was my good friend, my good friend Steve Lawson. He said that preaching a sermon is just like walking through a house.

[1 : 43] So preaching a sermon is like walking through a house. Because when you come to a house, you enter the front door into the porch. But you never stay long in the front porch.

You quickly move into the main part of the house. And then you walk through all these various rooms of the house. And that's what I want us to do this morning. I want us to walk through the front door of the house of this sermon.

And see that in the porch, in the introduction, we're being directed to three rooms. Three rooms called the feast, the firstborn, and the fire.

The feast, the firstborn, and the fire. So let's go to the first room. We've already gone through the front porch. So we see the feast.

Look at verse 3, the feast. Then Moses said to the people, Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery. For by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place.

[2 : 39] No leavened bread shall be eaten. Today in the month of Abib you are going out. And when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your father to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month.

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. And on the seventh day there shall be a feast. To the Lord. Now the feast of unleavened bread, it features repeatedly throughout Exodus chapter 12 and chapter 13.

It's first mentioned when the Lord instituted and instruct the Israelites about the Passover in chapter 12. Because it was, well, the feast of unleavened bread, or eating unleavened bread, was part of the Passover meal.

You remember that the Passover meal, it consisted of what was a substituted and a sacrificed Passover lamb that was roasted in fire, and then also the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread. And as we learned last Lord's Day, this first Passover meal, which they ate in Exodus chapter 12, we read about it, it was to be eaten as part of the Exodus.

[3 : 52] The Passover meal was to be eaten as part of the Exodus. Because as we saw, the midnight and the minute and the moment of the Exodus was an Easter Exodus.

It all took place on Easter Sunday. Because as we tried to work out last Lord's Day, when you work out the timeline of the Exodus, it's fascinating to see the timing of the Lord.

And the timing of the Lord and the timing of the Exodus was timed to perfection. What should always be a reminder and a reassurance to us that the Lord's timing in our lives is always perfect. It's always according to His perfect plan, path, purpose, and providence. The Lord's timing is always perfect. And for the Israelites who had suffered as slaves in Egypt, the Easter Exodus, it was 430 years in the making.

The Easter Exodus was 430 years in the making. Because when the Lord instituted the Passover and instructed the Israelites, He instructed them using what was a new religious calendar.

[5 : 00] He gave them a new religious calendar, which meant that on the first day of this religious year, it would have been a new month and a new week. It would have been the first day of a new week.

And as you know, the first day of the week is not Monday. It's Sunday. Therefore, when you look at the process of what they were told to do, you can go through it in Exodus chapter 12.

The first day of the week was a Sunday. So that means the 10th day of the month, the 10th day of the month, which was the day that they selected the suitable sacrifice, the Passover lamb, they were to select it from the flock in the field.

That would have been the second week of this new year. And it would have been a Tuesday.

Therefore, on the 14th day of the month, which was the day that the Israelites removed all the leaven from their homes in preparation for the Passover on the 14th day of the month.

And then at twilight, as the sun was going down on the 14th day of the month, we're told that the Passover lamb was to be slaughtered, was to be killed. The blood was to be shed on the door, on the lintel and on the doorposts of the house.

[6 : 12] And so the 14th day of this month would have been the last day of the second week, which was a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. But once the sun went down, it marked the beginning of the 15th day of the month.

And if you're still with me, the Jews counted evening to evening as their days. Therefore, the Passover meal with the lamb and the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread, it was to be eaten and enjoyed on the 15th day of the month.

The Passover of the Lord, when the Lord passed through all the houses in Egypt with this plague of death, it took place on the 15th day of the month. And so the midnight and the moment and the minute of the Exodus, it all took place on the 15th day of the month, which was the first day of a new week.

It was Sunday morning. It was Easter Sunday. And on that first Easter Sunday in Egypt, as the sun rose to a new day, Egypt was empty because the Lord had brought freedom from Pharaoh and salvation from slavery.

It was, as we saw last Lord's Day, it was an Easter exodus. It was an Easter exodus. Now, I remind you of this because after the very first Passover, which took place just after midnight on that Sunday morning, from one Sunday to the next Sunday, which is today, from one Sunday to the next Sunday, the Israelites were to keep the feast of unleavened bread.

[7 : 49] And we're told in Leviticus 23, verse 6, on the 15th day of the month is the feast of unleavened bread to the Lord. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.

And you know, I find it fascinating that on this first Passover, this first feast of unleavened bread, the Lord instructed the congregation of Israel that on that first day of the feast, which was a Sunday, and until the last day of the feast, which was also a Sunday, the congregation were to gather on those particular days.

They were to gather together for worship. We're told in Exodus chapter 12 that these gatherings were to be a holy convocation or a holy assembly.

It was to be a gathering together of the whole congregation of Israel. And they were to gather on these particular days. And as you know, by that point, the congregation of Israel was a congregational gathering of nearly three million people.

And so as the congregation of Israel gathered on that first Easter Sunday morning, they gathered not to work, but to worship.

[9 : 07] Because when they left Egypt, it was an act of worship. Their freedom from Pharaoh, their salvation from slavery, their exodus from Egypt, it was all an act of worship to the Lord.

It was all an act of worship to the Lord. And you know, it should remind us and reaffirm to us as to why we gather together on a Sunday.

We gather together on Sunday not to work, but to worship. We're to worship our risen and exalted Savior, Jesus Christ.

Because we're to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, not just on Easter Sunday, like last Sunday. We're to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus every Sunday. Not just once a year, but every week, every Lord's Day.

And we're to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus every Lord's Day because today is the first day of a new week. And you know, what better way to begin your new week than gathering together in an act of worship to the Lord?

[10:16] What better way to begin the week than coming together as a community and as a congregation and coming together in worship? And like the whole congregation of Israel who gathered on these two Sundays for the feast of Passover and the feast of unleavened bread, you know, in many ways, we should seek and strive to gather together on Sunday as a whole congregation.

And I emphasize the whole. Now, I know that there are those who really do seek and strive to gather for worship as a congregation on the Lord's Day.

I also know that there are those who would love to gather. They'd love to be here with us as a congregation on the Lord's Day, but due to illness and infirmity, they can't come.

And for those who are sick and those who are struggling and those who are suffering and sorrowing, we have the blessing and the benefit. We have the blessing and benefit of our services being live-streamed.

And it really is a blessing and benefit to have our services live-streamed. But, you know, there's always a danger in live-streaming services because when you're viewing online every week, the danger is you become a watcher, not a worshiper.

[11:40] You become passive instead of being a participant. Therefore, I want to say to those who may be watching online this morning, and I say it because it's so easily done, don't allow the live-stream to make you lazy.

Don't allow the live-stream to make you live in lockdown on the Lord's Day. Don't allow the provision of online services to make you stay at home and stay away. And certainly, don't allow the devil don't allow the devil to make you feel distant and detached from our congregation.

Because, as you know, you are welcome and you are warmly invited to come and worship with us. Because we're to worship like the Israelites as a whole congregation.

But I also want to say to us as a whole congregation, whether we're here or at home, as a whole congregation, remember that the Lord's Day isn't half a day.

The Lord's Day is the whole day. It's not half a day. It's a whole day. And so we're called and commanded just like the Israelites were. We're getting all this from Scripture.

[12:52] It's not Myrtle having a go. We are commanded and called to gather together as a whole congregation. for the whole day. Both ends on the Lord's Day.

Because, friends, it's the Lord's Day. It's not our day. It's the Lord's Day. Therefore, we should give the day to the Lord in an act of worship.

We should give the day to the Lord in an act of worship. And so what we see here is that from one Sunday to the next, in a week, from Easter Sunday to the following Sunday, the congregation of Israel, they only ate unleavened bread.

And they gathered together to worship on these two Sundays. But not eating leavened bread, but only eating unleavened bread, by doing that, it was to be a sign and a symbol of salvation.

Eating unleavened bread was a sign and symbol of salvation because for generations to come, and as it still is with the Jews today, for generations to come, when the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was commemorated and celebrated each year, we read something interesting there that the parents were to teach and tell their children of what the Lord did at the Exodus.

[14:13] That's why they gathered every year. It was to remind the next generation of what the Lord did in the past. They were to remind their children and their grandchildren of what the Lord did for them in salvation.

And you know, as Christian parents and as Christian grandparents, it should remind us about our role and our responsibility that we too, we are to talk and we're to teach and we're to tell our children and our grandchildren about the influence of sin and the importance of salvation.

because as Christian parents and as Christian grandparents, you know, our passion, our priority should be to encourage and enable our children and grandchildren to love Jesus and look to Jesus and listen to Jesus and learn from Jesus and lean upon Jesus and even live their lives for Jesus. Because as we know, and we're seeing it and hearing it all the time, our children and grandchildren and those who are yet unborn, they are growing up in a chaotic and confused society. And there are so many voices, so many vices calling out for their soul. And you know, that's why the Lord always emphasized to His people about teaching the next generation, teaching your children and your grandchildren.

[15 : 42] And that's the teaching for us too. We're to talk to our children and teach our children and tell our children and grandchildren about the influence of sin and the importance of salvation.

And I know that's not easy. I speak to you as a parent, not yet a grandparent, but I speak to you as a parent. And I know it's not easy, but it's so important.

With so many voices, so many vices calling out for the souls of our children, we need to teach them about the influence of sin. And the importance of salvation.

So that's the first room, the feast. We go secondly to the second room, the firstborn. So the feast and the firstborn. The firstborn.

Look again at verse 1. The Lord said to Moses, Consecrate to me all the firstborn, whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast is mine.

[16 : 47] You know, in the ancient world, the firstborn had a special significance. Because the firstborn in the family and the firstborn in the field, they were to be devoted and dedicated to the Lord because He is our Creator, King.

We sang earlier in Psalm 24 that the earth belongs unto the Lord and all that it contains, the world that is inhabited and all that there remains.

Therefore, the whole of creation and all of its contents, it all belongs to the Lord, our Creator, King. But in response to the Lord's goodness and the Lord's gracious gifts towards us, the congregation of Israel was to devote and dedicate the firstborn in the family and also the firstborn in the field.

They were to devote and dedicate it all to the Lord because all that we have is from the Lord. He's our Creator, King. In fact, you know, the Bible, it reminds us that it's in Him that we live and we move and we have our being.

And it's from the Lord we have received all the blessings and all the benefits in our lives. As James reminds us in his New Testament letter, he says, every good and perfect gift has come from above.

[18 : 08] It's all from above. Therefore, my friend, our children, our cattle, our crops, our car, our clothing, and our cash, they are all a gift to us from God.

And it's in response to the Lord's good and the Lord's gracious gifts towards us that we are to dedicate and devote our gifts back to the Lord.

You know, this is where the concept of the free will offering comes from, where we give our monetary gifts to the church or to missionary organizations or to charities, but we give it freely. It's a free will offering. And it's not a gift to the creation. It's a gift to the Creator. It's not a gift to man, although it helps man. It's a gift, ultimately, to the Maker.

It's a gift in response to His goodness and His gracious gifts, first and foremost, towards us. But, of course, the Lord's gifts to us are not only of creation.

[19 : 14] The gift is also of salvation. Because, as you know, the Lord is not only our Creator King, He's also our Covenant King. He's our Savior. He's our Redeemer. And He was the Savior and Redeemer of the Israelites from Egypt.

And that's, you know, that's the language that's used here in this chapter. It's the language of redemption. The language of buying back. Because we read there in verse 12, that the firstborn male in the field was to be devoted and dedicated to the Lord.

It says in verse 12, you shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb, all the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the Lord's.

Do you know, as those living in a crafting community, and I'm sure many of you this morning, you can relate to this. I'm sure we can all relate to this, especially at this time of year that the lambing season is upon us.

And there are so many shepherds in our community who are keeping a close eye on their flock. They're up early. They're going to bed late. They're up during the night at all hours. And they're constantly, constantly waiting and watching over their flock.

[20 : 24] But you know, if the shepherds in our community, if they had been part of the congregation of Israel, whether it was a ewe lambing for the first time or a cow calving for the first time, the firstborn male of every sheep or cow, or if you have goats, that was to be set apart and sacrificed to the Lord.

Now I'm sure you're going through in your mind all your flock who are male and all the ones that were firstborn and how much I'd have to sacrifice to the Lord. But you know, the reason they did it was to explain and emphasize to us about the people's devotion and their dedication to the Lord. It was all about devotion and dedication because they had been saved. They had been saved from slavery. But the thing is, it was not only the firstborn sheep and the firstborn cattle and the firstborn goats that were set apart and sacrificed to the Lord, they were set apart and sacrificed to the Lord because they were clean.

But when it came to the firstborn of a donkey or the firstborn of a pig, well, they were unclean animals. And we read in verse 13, every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb or if you will not redeem it, you shall break its neck.

Now, it seems a bit graphic and a bit gruesome that if the owner of a firstborn donkey doesn't want to keep that firstborn donkey, he's not allowed to sacrifice it to the Lord because it's an unclean animal.

[22 : 03] But if he doesn't want to keep it, he has to put it to death and he has to break its neck. But if the owner does want to keep this donkey to work the ground and do whatever with it, he must redeem it.

He must redeem it by sacrificing and substituting a clean animal in its place. And, you know, it's an image, an illustration of salvation.

The clean for the unclean. The clean for the unclean. The clean for the the clean spotless lamb substituted and sacrificed in the place of the unclean animal.

And as you know, my friend, that's the glory of the gospel. The clean for the unclean. The savior for the sinner. That's the beauty of salvation. The clean for the unclean.

And, you know, our Bible tells us and teaches us that our Jesus, he's the spotless lamb of God who knew no sin. He's the clean. And yet, he became unclean. He took our sin upon himself so that we might be presented before God as clean and as righteous.

[23 : 15] We are the unclean. He is the clean. And yet, he became unclean to make us clean. But there's more because it was not only the firstborn beast in the field that was devoted and dedicated to the Lord.

We see that the firstborn boy in the family was also devoted and dedicated to the Lord by redemption. And the firstborn boy was to be redeemed by also substituting and sacrificing a lamb in its place.

And this was to be done in every family, every home in Israel. So this three million people, every home, every family, in every generation, the firstborn son had to be redeemed.

They had to be redeemed by the blood of a lamb, a substituted and sacrificed lamb. Because as the Lord says in verse 14, and when in time to come, your son shall ask you.

So you're to redeem your sons because that son will ask you why. And he will ask you, what does this mean? And you shall say to him, by a strong hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt from the house of slavery.

[24 : 28] 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 opened the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.

And you know, redeeming the firstborn son was so that the congregation of Israel, they would never forget what the Lord did for them. It was always about remembering their salvation.

They were never to forget what the Lord had done for them and how he had protected them and provided for them during the Passover and the plague of death. But you know, redeeming the firstborn son by substituting and sacrificing a lamb in its place, you know, I think for all these families in Israel, this three million gathering, you know, it must have made them think of their ancestor, Abraham.

They must have thought back to what Abraham had to do because was it not Abraham who devoted and dedicated his firstborn son to the Lord? Was it not Abraham who substituted and

sacrificed a clean animal in place of his son, Isaac?

[25 : 52] And was it not Abraham who said on Mount Moriah, he said, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering? And that lamb, of course, points us forward to the New Testament, to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

I know that's why Jesus says in the New Testament, he says about Abraham back in Genesis 22, he says, Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he was glad.

Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he was glad. Abraham rejoiced to see redemption being accomplished and applied by the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And you know, my friend, the Israelites, they were always being reminded time and time again, being reminded of what the Lord had done for them in salvation. And you know, my friend, I think it's always good for us to be reminded time and time again of what the Lord has done for us in salvation.

The clean for the unclean. The clean for the unclean. This brings us to our third and final room of the house, the fire.

[27 : 09] So the feast, the firstborn, and the fire. The fire. Look at verse 21. It says here, 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.

The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. You know, when the congregation of Israel made their exodus from Egypt, the Lord led them all the way to the promised land.

And He went before them, we're told, in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And the pillar was a symbol of the Lord's promised presence amongst His people.

The pillar was a symbol of the Lord's promised presence amongst His people. It was a constant and continual reminder and even a reassurance that the Lord was with His people.

He was with them and He was with them every step of the way. He was with them every step of the way.

[28 : 24] And you know, my friend, I want you to claim this promise this morning because that's what the Lord is promising to you this morning. Because wherever you are in your wilderness journey, wherever you are in this wilderness journey, whether you're at the beginning, just professing your faith, just coming out on the side of Jesus, or whether you're near the end and your life is drawing to a close, wherever you are in the journey, wherever you are in the pilgrim's progress, what the Lord reminds us here in Exodus 13 is that He promises His presence will be with you every step of the way.

from the first step as it was in Exodus 13 to the last step in the book of Joshua. From the first step to the last, the Lord is with you every step of the way.

And you know, the thing is, we don't always feel the Lord's presence. We don't always feel His presence, but as Martin Luther said, feelings come and feelings go.

Feelings are deceiving, but my warrant is the Word of God and what else is worth believing. And the Word of God promises you this morning, and I want you to claim this promise.

The Lord promises you this morning that His presence will go with you every step of the way. He'll be with you from the first step until the very last step.

[29 : 58] Every step of the pilgrim's progress, from the city of destruction all the way to the celestial city. So wherever you are this morning in the pilgrim's progress, whether you're in the slough of despond, full of doubt, or you're around the wicked gate, or you're in the valley of humiliation, or you're climbing the hill called difficulty, or even facing the valley of the shadow of death, wherever you are in the pilgrim's progress, the Lord promises His presence will go with you every step of the way.

It's a wonderful promise. The Lord promises that His presence will go with you every step of the way. Of course, there are some of you here this morning who haven't left the city of destruction yet. You're still in the city of destruction. I don't know why you're there, but you're still there. And you haven't taken that step. You haven't fled like Christian fled with his fingers in his ears, crying, life, life, eternal life.

You haven't taken that step in committing your life to Jesus. And maybe it's because you wonder or you worry that if you begin this journey, if you commit your life to Jesus, you won't see it through to the end.

you worry that somewhere along the journey you'll fail. You worry that maybe you'll fall as a Christian and you don't want to be a disappointment to the Lord.

[31 : 35] But you know, my friend, as it was with the Israelites at the Exodus from Egypt, so it will be with you. The Lord promises that His presence will go with you from the first step until the very last step.

And you have seen that evidenced in the lives of other Christians, have you not? You've seen the Lord be with them from the beginning right to the very end.

And that's His promise to you today. He promises that His presence will be with you every step of the way. And with this, I'll close.

You know, you can have the assurance of the Lord's promised presence because the Bible gives you a double promise. The Bible gives you a double promise.

And it's a double promise because it doesn't matter which way you read this promise. It's a promise that is sure and certain. You know, in Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 5, the Lord promises you, and this is your promise to claim this morning, I will never leave you or forsake you.

[32 : 45] I will never leave you or forsake you. But it's a double promise. So if you read it forward, it's I will never leave you or forsake you. If you read it backwards, you forsake or you leave.

Never will I. I will never leave you or forsake you. You forsake or you leave.

Never will I. You know, it's a double promise. And it's a personal promise. And it's a promise from God's Word that is sure and steadfast.

And it's a promise for you, my unconverted friend, that you can take that first step. And it's a promise that He'll be with you every step of the way. And it's a promise for you, my Christian friend, this morning that He's still with you.

He hasn't left you. He hasn't forsaken you. Because His promise to you, and it's a personal promise that you need to claim and you need to confess it.

[33 : 54] I will never leave you or forsake you. You forsake or you leave. never will I.

You claim that promise this morning. You confess it because it's the wonderful promise of God's Word given to you through Jesus Christ.

But may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for being so good to us, for giving us so much in life, that we have so many blessings and so many benefits.

But Lord, we realize that when we come to Thy Word, what a glorious gospel it is, what a great hope we have, what a wonderful promise presented to us, that the God of heaven promises to every one of His people, those who make that first step, that from the first step until the last, that He is with us every step of the way.

Help us, Lord, to know this in our own heart, to know it in our own experience, to claim these promises and to confess them, because every promise that is in Thy Word, it is yea and amen in Christ.

[35 : 14] These promises are sure and steadfast. They are, as Thy Word assures us, the anchor of our soul. Bless us then, we pray. Watch over us, we ask, and help us, we pray, to keep looking to Jesus, to know Him, to love Him and confess Him as the author and the finisher of our faith.

Go before us then, we pray, take away our iniquity, receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning.

We're going to sing. Sing in Psalm 105. Psalm 105, it's in the Scottish Psalter. We're singing from verse 38 down to the verse marked 43.

So on page 377, if you're using the Blue Psalm book, Psalm 105, page 377, and we're singing from verse 38.

Like Psalm 78, which we sang earlier, Psalm 105 is another psalm which recounts the history and retells the history of the Israelites in Egypt and leaving Egypt.

[36 : 28] And the verses that we're singing is just when they've left or when they leave Egypt.

Verse 38, Egypt was glad when forth they went. Their fear on them did light.

He spread a cloud for covering and fire to shine by night. They asked and he brought quails. With bread of heaven he filled them. He opened rocks, floods gushed and ran in deserts like a stream. For on his holy promise he and servant Abram thought with joy his people, his elect, with gladness forth he brought. So we'll sing these verses in conclusion of Psalm 105 to God's praise.

Egypt was glad. Egypt was glad when forth they went, their fear on them did light.

He spread the light for covering. He spread the light for covering and fire to shine by night.
[37 : 45] They asked and he brought wills with bread. They asked and he brought wills with bread.
Of them he filled with them. He opened rocks, and he brought the light for covering In deserts like a stream.
For all this holy promise he.
And servant Abraham thought. With joy his people his healing.
With madness for deep wrong. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
[39 : 01] The love of God the Father. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all. Now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.