

Exodus 12:1-14,24-30: Passover (Matthew 26 Last Supper) (7 Sept 2014)

Start of new series: Having looked at Jesus as ‘the new Israel’ – fulfilling all that Israel was meant to be –at the beginning of the year, September’s lectionary readings give us the chance to go back to the original! Over the next 5 weeks, we’ll revisit the incredible story of how God rescues his people from Egypt, and continues to bless them despite their doubts and grumbling. Along the way we’ll learn about some key themes of how God saves, of faithfulness in times of testing and of what it means to be the covenant people of God. (*BCP – first story Passover...*)

Symbol test (SLIDES) – they mean something. Story full of symbols with a powerful meaning. But before we get to today’s passage...

Recap story so far (SLIDE) – Joseph packed off to Egypt, famine, whole family/nation relocates. Price of survival is slavery. 400 years.

Raises up a rescuer – Moses – ‘Let my people go’ (**SLIDES**). 10 plagues – ASK – **SLIDE**. Signs of God’s power and authority – confront Egyptian Gods: 1river of blood=Nile-god Hapy, 2frog=frog goddess Haket, 5livestock-cow goddess Hathor, 9darkness=sun-god Amun-Ra – READ 12:12 ‘I will bring judgement on all their gods’ – there is only one real God

BUT Pharaoh refuses to release them. One final judgement to force the issue – Passover.

Iconic story – powerful symbolism and community drama. (**SLIDE**)

- Everyone takes part and does it together;
- visual symbol – lambs’ blood as their protection;
- imagery of food – bitter herbs for slavery; no yeast as no time for bread to rise (lead to)
- preparedness - get ready to leave (eat with sandals on and cloak tucked into belt)

Disturbing elements of story... Why blood sacrifice? – (obviously most humans eat meat, but why blood thing?) – explain later

Why kill first born?

- Unique event in history – unique purpose
- Nothing else worked – Pharaoh should have relented a long time ago – uncomfortable fact that people like being in charge and exploiting others, and find it easy to ignore God's interventions
- God judges nations as well as individuals – complicity of whole nation – Israelites were 'neighbours' – they (Egyptians) saw and condoned it. Sobering reminder that we cannot just shrug our shoulders when we see injustice in society, or we are complicit in it as well.
- Progressive revelation – i.e. that God reveals himself little by little, so we understand more of who he is. So we have to judge by standards of time, early in understanding of who God is – God has lots more of himself to reveal but humans weren't ready for it. (SLIDE – tree/stairs)

How did our understanding develop?

- generational judgement (sins of fathers visited on children) to all responsible for their own sin Jer 31:30
- blood sacrifice normal way to worship deity – but often own children (e.g. Molech). God forbids this (1st big change) – paves way for one sacrifice for all time (and then no longer required) – transformation from humans (pagan way) to animals to one person for all time to not required any longer (fulfilled)
- all firstborn to one firstborn

Lead into 2nd passage – when Jesus celebrates Passover. Annual event, as for every Jew, and a special moment. What Jesus does is extraordinary (SLIDE) – gets to bread and says it's his body; and wine (symbolises the blood) and it's his blood. He is now the sacrificial lamb that saves the people. He is the sacrifice of Passover – not just for Jews, but for whole world.

This story doesn't stop, it grows and develops. And the symbol becomes literal – Jesus enters the story and not only transforms it, he completes it.

Where Passover lamb saved one people at one moment in time – the new lamb saves all people for all time.

And so 2,000 years later we are still remembering it regularly (**SLIDE**). Every time we share bread and wine, we not only remember how God rescued his people in Exodus, but how he rescues us in Jesus, how he is still in the business of rescuing.

As share communion today: one thought. Jews ate Passover with sandals on and cloak tucked in – ready to go. Active meal, not a passive one. Not an escape from world into own private worship space, but a preparation for journey.

Look at post-communion – ‘send us out in the power of your Spirit, to live and work to your praise and glory’ (**SLIDE** – expand – readiness to go). Don’t take this the wrong way, but are your sandals on? (**SLIDE**) Will you be fed so you can be ready to go and serve the world, in whatever way God calls you?