



Powerful Promises

Exodus 6:2-8

- 1. God remembers His promises (verses 2-5).**
- 2. God renews His promise (verses 7-8).**
- 3. God redeems His people (verse 6).**
- 4. God reveals His power (verse 6b).**

In our exposition through the entire Bible this year, we left off last week with Jacob's sons arriving safely in the land of Egypt. Through God's providential working in the life of Joseph, they were saved from the famine. They settled in the land of Goshen, where "they acquired property ... and were fruitful and became very numerous" (Gen. 47:27). This morning we come to the book of Exodus, which is really a continuation of the book of Genesis. The sons of Israel are still in the land of Egypt. They are still increasing in number. In fact, we read in Exodus 1:7 that "the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them" (Exodus 1:7).

Such a population explosion among the Hebrew people was in fulfillment of all that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To each one of these patriarchs, God had promised that they would be a great nation (Gen. 12:2; 21:18; 35:11). Such an increase in the number of the Hebrew people certainly was a great encouragement to them. After all, to be a great nation, you need to have many people in that nation. However, this increase caused great concern for the Pharaoh over Egypt. He said, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land" (Ex. 1:9-10). And so, the Egyptians chose to enslave the sons of Israel, compelling them to build some storage cities for the Egyptians (Ex. 1:11-13). These Egyptians "made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks" (Ex. 1:14).

Due to their hardship, the sons of Israel cried to the LORD for help (Ex. 2:23). It is all that they could do. Their situation was very difficult. The Egyptians had set taskmasters over the Hebrew people to drive them in their work for the Egyptian government. They had their quota of bricks to make. When they failed to meet their quota, they were being beaten (Ex. 2:11; 5:14). When they pleaded for mercy and some time away to worship the LORD, they were accused of being "lazy" and driven on all the more. Such oppression caused them to seek relief from the only source possible: from God, Himself. They "cried out" to God for help (Ex. 2:23).

The story of Exodus is the story of how "God heard their groaning; and [how] God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex. 2:24). God had made some high and lofty promises to the patriarchs. God had promised to Abraham that (1) He would be given a land; that (2) he would be a great nation; and that (3) he would be blessed greatly. But, during their time of slavery in Egypt, none of these things were taking place. Oh, to be sure, they were increasing in number, but they could hardly be called a great nation, as they had no land that they could call their own. In no way were they being blessed. They were being oppressed in slavery!

The story of the Exodus is a story of God bringing this numerous people into a land of their own, forming their own nation, and thereby blessing them greatly. In other words, the story of the Exodus is a story of God being true to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God had seen the affliction of His people in Egypt (Ex. 3:7). God was aware of their sufferings (Ex. 3:7). God had heard their cry (Ex. 3:7). God came to deliver the people of Israel from their bondage (Ex. 3:8). He did so through the human agency of a man named, Moses.

In the first eight verses of Exodus 6, we see several of these ideas coming together. We see God speaking to Moses, the one who will deliver Israel from their bondage (verse 2). We see God acknowledging the groaning of the sons of Israel (verse 5). We see God remembering His promises that He made with the patriarchs (verse 5). We see God setting forth a plan to help His people (verse 6). For this reason, Exodus 6 forms a great place for us to use as a guide to our thoughts through the first half of the book of Exodus.

Exodus 6:2-8

God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.'"

I have entitled my message this morning, "Powerful Promises." As you read through the text that I will expound this morning, please consider the number of promises that God makes. He begins this text by bringing to remembrance some of the promises that He made in the past. He

continues on with more promises. Seven times He says, "I will." This is because God is a promise-making and a promise-keeping God. Let's consider our first point, ...

1. God remembers His promises (verses 2-5).

God begins His discussion with Moses with a recollection of His interaction with the patriarchs. He told Moses of what He had promised to them, hundreds of years before. In verse 3, He said that He "appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." It's at this point that we can really see the benefit of going through the Bible this year. Because you can't understand Exodus until you first understand the story of the promises that God made to Abraham. This is because the whole reason for God rescuing His people from the Egyptian bondage was because of a promise previously made to Abraham. This is the point of verse 5, "I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant." This is my point: God remembers His promises (verses 2-5).

Now, when God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He appeared to them as "God Almighty," the all-powerful God. The Hebrew term that God brings to remembrance here is "El Shaddai," which means, "The powerful God," or as translated, "God Almighty." You can chase down several instances in which this took place. God appeared to Abraham and said, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless" (Genesis 17:1). Isaac used the same name of God in blessing his son. He said, "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you" (Genesis 28:3). God appeared to Jacob saying, "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 35:11).

But here in verse 3, God says that His revelation to Moses was a bit different. He didn't reveal Himself to Moses as "God Almighty." He revealed Himself to Moses by His name, "LORD," or as the Hebrew says, "Yahweh" (Verse 3). If you look carefully in your English Bible, you will find the name, "LORD" in all capital letters: Capital, "L" ... capital, "O" ... capital, "R" ... capital, "D". This is to be distinguished from when the Bible uses only a capital, "L", with a lower case "o" ... lower case "r" ... and lower case "d." When the word, "LORD" is in all capital letters, it signifies the name of God. Perhaps in the margin of your Bible, you will see some sort of note indicating this. In my Bible, it says that in the Hebrew, the word is "YHWH," which (to the best of our knowledge) is pronounced, "Yahweh." The American Standard Version of 1901 translates this word using the familiar "Jehovah," which is also a good translation. This is the name of God. We refer to people using their names, "Like Steve or Bill or Fred or Jim." Should we refer to God by His name, we would say, "Yahweh" (or "Jehovah"). It's His name.

As you read through the book of Genesis, you realize the significance of one's name. "Abraham" means "a father of a multitude" (Gen. 17:5), for that is who God called him to be. "Isaac" means "laughter" because that is what Sarah did when God told her that she would bear a son in her old age (Gen. 21:6). "Jacob" means "heal" because he came out of the womb, holding on to his twin brother's heal (Gen. 25:26). "Joseph" means "addition" because at his birth, Rachel prayed that the Lord would "add to her" another son (Gen. 30:24).

The significance of God's name is equally rich. God revealed it to Moses in Exodus, chapter 3. When God appeared to Moses and sent him to the sons of Israel (Ex. 3:13). Initially, Moses objected, saying that the people might ask for God's name. And so, God revealed His name to Moses saying, "I AM WHO I AM." The word "Yahweh" is related to these words. "Yahweh" is a form of the verb, "to be." Thus, God's name represents his eternal, everlasting character. He has always existed. He has always been. He is the "ancient of days" (Dan. 7:9). He is the self-existent one, who needs no other.

Many consider God to be so high and holy, that we shouldn't even say God's name. We do this with people. When addressing the president of the United States, people will most often address him as "Mr. President." Rarely will they use his first name. It would be quite disrespectful of his authority. So also with God. The Jewish people considered God's name to be so holy, that they wouldn't even say it. Often, they would simply refer to God as "the Name." Even today, when the Jewish people come across the name of God in their Hebrew Bible, they read "Adonai" (which means "Lord"), instead of "Yahweh," which is written. That's why our translations of the Bible are the way that they are, referring to Yahweh as "The LORD." Rather than actually saying the name of God, our English translations simply substitute His title: The LORD - The ever-existing, all-sufficient one.

At this point, we must point out that God's name will hold significance throughout the rest of the Exodus narrative. When God redeemed the people from Egypt, He did so to demonstrate His power that His name might be made known. We read in Psalm 106:8 that God "saved them for the sake of His name, that he might make His power known."

In verse 4, we see God repeating the promise that He made with the patriarchs. God said that He had "established [a] covenant with them" to give them the land of Canaan." Two weeks ago, we went through several passages that demonstrated that God made this promise to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob. And when God makes a promise, you might be assured that it will come to pass. That was the thrust of my message last week. God will go through incredible means to fulfill His promises. He will even intend to use the evil of others to accomplish His good purposes (Gen. 50:20). And this morning, we will see what great lengths God will go through in order to insure that His promises will come true (see Gen. 12:2; 26:3; 28:13, 15; 50:24, 25).

In verses 7 and 8 we see that ...

2. God renews His promise (verses 7-8).

Exodus 6:7-8

Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.

These verses are a renewal of the promises that God made to the patriarchs. It had been several hundred years since they had heard these things from the mouth of God. He wanted to affirm to them that the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob still stand true. Verse 8 puts forth two promises, "I will bring you to the land," and "I will give it to you for a possession." But, the better renewal is in verse 7. It is in this verse that God promises that He would be their God, and they would be His people. Such a statement is made in one way or another

many, many times in the Bible. [\[1\]](#)

"I will take you for My people, and I will be your God" is the ultimate pledge of God, which He makes over and over and over again to His people. He made it to Abraham, "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you" (Gen. 17:7). He made it to the people of Jeremiah's day, "'This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (Jer. 31:33). He made it to Ezekiel, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. ... you will be My people, and I will be your God" (Ezek. 36:28). God spoke through Zechariah, saying, "Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; and I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness" (Zech. 8:8).

And this is ultimately the promise that we receive in Christ. By faith in Jesus, we come to be a part of the people of God. Hosea prophesies of a day in which "I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'" (Hosea 2:23). Peter tells us that this promise was fulfilled in the church, among those who believe in Christ (1 Pet. 2:10). We weren't the people of God, but then, have come to be the people of God in Him. This affirmation of being God's people continues throughout all eternity. In the book of Revelation we read of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, and a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them" (Rev. 21:3).

The Psalmist said it right, "How blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!" (Ps. 144:15). Is your God the LORD? Do you know of this blessing? To be a child of God, you simply need to believe and trust in Christ to redeem you (as He did the people of Egypt).

In order for God to fulfill His promises, however, He needs to set His people free, which comes in verse 6, ...

This comes in verse 6, ...

3. God redeems His people (verse 6).

Exodus 6:6 says, "Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgements.'" God had made some promises to Abraham and to His offspring. But here in Exodus 6, are the promises that God makes specifically to the generation of Moses.

He affirmed to that generation, "You are experiencing hardship as slaves right now? I will free you from your slavery. I know that of the bondage that you are experiencing right now, but soon, you will be set free! I know that you are slaves right now, but I will ransom you out of your slavery." In saying these things, God's plans were made clear. He plans to take the people out of Egypt and to free them. Never think that such things caught God by surprise. Long before they even came to Egypt, God told Abraham, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions"

(Genesis 15:13-14). God knew and God planned and God insured that the descendants of Abraham would be enslaved. God knew that He would then redeem the people from slavery, thereby bringing great glory to Himself!

God could have redeemed the Hebrew people in many ways. With Abraham, God simply commanded him to leave the land of the Chaldeans and go to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1, 5). You have to believe that God was fully capable of softening Pharaoh's heart to the cause of the Hebrew people and let them go. God could easily have turned the heart of Pharaoh as channels of water (Prov. 21:1) to allow this to take place. The reason that I say this is because time after time after time in this narrative, God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, so that he wouldn't let the people go. Likewise, God could have softened his heart to allow the people to go, because, eventually, Pharaoh does (Ex. 12:31). But, the precise point of the narrative is that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, so as to reveal His power, and thereby bringing great glory to His name (i.e. Yahweh). It is only because Pharaoh wouldn't let the people go that God was enabled to put His amazing power on display. Which leads to my fourth (and final) point this morning, ...

4. God reveals His power (verse 6b).

I want us to focus upon the very last promise of verse 6, in which we read, "I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments" (See Ex. 7:4). These words are referring to God's mighty display of His power in the plagues that came upon the land of Egypt. We know this because this is the way that these phrases are used in Exodus 7:4-5.

Every child is told in Sunday school of these ten plagues that God did in the land of Egypt. Each of them has a similar pattern. Moses and Aaron come to Pharaoh and say to Him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Let My people go.'" But, Pharaoh has a hard heart and refuses to let them go. So, Moses and Aaron warn him of some plague that will come upon the land of Egypt. Then Moses and Aaron leave Pharaoh's presence. And, sure enough, the plague takes place exactly as Moses and Aaron predict. After experiencing how terrible the plague is, Pharaoh then calls for Moses and Aaron and entreats them to stop the plague, promising to let the Hebrew people go. Moses and Aaron tell Pharaoh when the plague will stop. When it does, Pharaoh's heart hardens once again, and he refuses to let the people of Israel go. And then, the process starts all over again.

This happened ten times! **First**, the water in the Nile is turned to blood. "The fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile" (Ex. 7:21). "So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink" (Ex. 7:24). **Second**, frogs came upon the entire land. They came into the houses and into the bedrooms and onto their beds and into their ovens and into their kneading bowls (Ex. 8:3). They were everywhere! **Third**, God brought gnats upon the land of the Egyptians. Little creatures were everywhere, making a nuisance of themselves. **Fourth**, God brought "great swarms of flies" upon the land (Ex. 8:21). **Fifth**, God brought "a very severe pestilence on [the Egyptian] livestock (Ex. 9:3). All of the horses and donkeys and camels and sheep and cows that were in the fields died (Ex. 9:6). **Sixth**, God brought boils that broke out "with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt" (Ex. 9:9). Some

were so sore from their boils that they couldn't even come into the courts of Pharaoh when summoned (Ex. 9:11). **Seventh**, God brought hail upon the land of Egypt, which was so heavy that all who were in the field (both man and beast died) (Ex. 9:24). But not merely the animals, but also the plants in the field were destroyed as well (Ex. 9:25). **Eighth**, God brought locusts upon the land (Ex. 10:4). These creatures swarmed about the land and ate everything that escaped the damage done by the hail (Ex. 10:5, 13). "Nothing green was left on tree or plan of the field through all the land of Egypt" (Ex. 10:15). **Ninth**, God brought a darkness upon the land (Ex. 10:21). For three days, it was so dark that the people of Egypt "did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days" (Ex. 10:22). **Tenth**, and finally, the LORD went through all of Egypt during the night and killed the "firstborn in the land of Egypt ... from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well" (Ex. 11:5).

With these plagues, you need to ask yourself, "Why did God do such a thing?" It seems to be "cruel and unusual punishment." Fortunately, as you go throughout the narrative of the plagues, you find several verses that give a purpose of why God did this. I want to take you to a few of them. Let's first consider the passage found in Exodus 7:3-5.

Exodus 7:3-5

I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgements. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.

Here we see the purposes of it all. God hardens Pharaoh's heart so that He might multiply His signs and wonders. The end of it all will be that the Egyptians will know that it was the LORD (i.e. Yahweh) who brought out the sons of Israel from Egypt. In other words, God performed His signs that His name might be made known, especially among the Egyptians. Let's consider another passage that puts for God's reason for the plagues: Exodus 7:17.

Exodus 7:17

Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood."

Again, we see the same thing. As the water is turned to blood, Pharaoh will know that the LORD (i.e. Yahweh) is the One working the miracle. Let's consider another passage: Exodus 8:21-22.

Exodus 8:21-22

For if you do not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and on your servants and on your people and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they dwell. But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land."

Again, we see the same thing. When these swarms of flies came, God does an amazing thing. They only came upon the Egyptians. They didn't bother the Hebrew people, who were living in Goshen. And the division between the people came with a purpose: that Pharaoh might know that the LORD (i.e. Yahweh) was in the midst of the land (verse 22). There are other passages that put forth a similar idea.

Exodus 9:13-16

Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.'"

I trust that you are beginning to see a pattern here. Verse 14 says that God sent these plagues, "so that" the Egyptians might know that there is no other god like the LORD (i.e. Yahweh) in all the earth. Verse 16 says that God was allowing the Egyptians to remain alive so that He might have an opportunity to show His power and His name (i.e. Yahweh) through all the earth.

At this point, you need to see that God was in absolute control of the entire situation. God determined what plagues would come. He determined when they would come. He determined who they would affect. And He determined how severe they might be. God could easily have wiped out the Egyptians. But, to do so would mean that God would no longer have a stage upon which to show off His power for the sake of His name, which was God's purpose of these plagues in the first place.

I remember visiting a farm one hot, summer day.. The owners of this farm owned a large German Shepherd. I remember seeing this German Shepherd lying down on the ground in the shade of the barn with something in his paws. As I came closer, I saw that he had caught a mouse. This dog was having fun playing with the little creature. He would let the mouse go, allowing it to scamper off a bit, and then grab it, just as it was beginning to reach beyond its clutches. Then, this dog would bring the mouse back close to himself, only to allow the mouse to scamper off again. Over and over he was doing this to the poor mouse. At times, he was even picking the mouse up by its tail. He was careful not to kill the mouse, for that would spoil all the fun!

This is a bit like what God was doing with Pharaoh and Egypt. He was "playing" with them for His own glory. Should the heart of Pharaoh be

soft and the people set free, the fun would be over! Lest you think that I am extending the metaphor too far, please consider the language that God uses in Exodus 10:1-2.

Exodus 10:1-2

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, so that He could perform His signs among them. (Had Pharaoh's heart not been hardened, then God would have had no opportunity to display His amazing power). He did this that the Hebrew people might be able to tell their children and their grandchildren of how God was making a mockery of the poor Egyptians! God was toying with them. His actions upon the Egyptians were intended to humiliate! Ultimately, the goal was that the children (and grandchildren) might know that the LORD (i.e. Yahweh).

We could continue on to consider other passages, such as Ex. 11:7, 10; 14:4, which all make the same point. "Why did God do all these plagues?" To display His power so that He might make His name known. To make it known to the Egyptians as well as to the Jews as well as for all who would hear the story down through the ages. This is the point that Paul makes in Romans 9:17, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth'" (quoting Exodus 9:16). Like God's promises to the patriarchs, these plagues are mentioned time and time and time again in the rest of the Scriptures to remind the people of Israel of the great works of God! (Psalm 105:26-38; Psalm 78:42-53).

As I bring my message this morning to a close, I want to have us think about the last plague that God brought upon the Egyptians. For in it, God displays the wonders of His power in greater ways than in any other plague. Exodus 11:4-8 tells the story of what will take place.

Exodus 11:4-8

Moses said, "Thus says the LORD, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well. Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again. But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, "Go out, you and all the people who follow you," and after that I will go out.'" And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

By far this is the worst plague that comes upon the people of Egypt. They had experienced sour drinking water (plague #1). They had experienced darkness upon the land, which brought everybody to a standstill (plague #9). They had experienced the nuisance of frogs, gnats, and insects (plagues #2, #3, #4). They had experienced the pain of boils upon their skin (plague #6). They had experienced the loss of crops (through hail and through the locusts) (plagues #7, #8). They had even experienced some of their livestock dying (plague #5), as well as those who refused to seek shelter during the hail (#7). But this plague was far worse.

This was far more extensive. Every family tasted death personally. From the royal family to the common slave girl (Ex. 11:5); from the highest official to the captive in the dungeon (Ex. 12:29), including their livestock! (Ex. 11:5). Every first-born died.

As the LORD went through the land of Egypt, He was very careful and very discerning. It was only the firstborn that was put to death. Both man and animal. Such a deed not only demonstrates God's power, but it also demonstrates God's omniscience. The LORD could visit hundreds of thousands of homes and discern which child or animal was the first born and see to it that it died. This is ultimately what broke the heart of Pharaoh. The other plagues saw Pharaoh bending, attempting to make a deal with Moses. During the plague of hail, he confessed his sin against the LORD and pledged to let the people go (Ex. 9:27), but later hardened his heart as Pharaoh didn't yet fear the Lord (Ex. 9:30, 34). After the locusts came, Pharaoh told Moses to "Go, serve the LORD your God" (Ex. 10:8), but later wouldn't let the children go (Ex. 10:10-11). When the plague relented, once again, God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he wouldn't let the people go (Ex. 10:20). After the darkness, Pharaoh was willing to let Israel go without their animals (Ex. 10:24), but Moses refused such a deal (Ex. 10:25). But, when Pharaoh saw that throughout the land of Egypt, that "there was no home where there was not someone dead" (Ex. 12:30), he finally let the people go. The Hebrew people were enabled to escape before God hardened Pharaoh's heart again (Ex. 14:4).

Now, the miraculous thing that comes from this story is that none of the Hebrew households experienced this death. God made a distinction between Israel and Egypt. In Goshen, all was still that night. Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. Not even a dog barked (Ex. 11:7). It's because the Hebrew households were told what to do to escape the death. They were to take an unblemished male lamb on the tenth of the month (Ex. 12:3-5). This lamb was to be taken into their home for a few days, but on the fourteenth day of the month, they were to slaughter the lamb at twilight (Ex. 12:6). Then, they were to take the blood and put it around their door (Ex. 12:7) and eat the lamb (Ex. 12:8). At midnight, when the LORD went through the land of Egypt, He passed over the houses with the blood upon it (Ex. 12:13). And thus, the name, Passover (Ex. 12:11).

And from that day on, the Jewish people have continued to celebrate this event every year. For 3,400 years that have done so, by divine command.

Exodus 12:24-27a

And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. When you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. And when your children say to you, "What does this rite mean to you?" you shall say, "It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes"

At this point, we come back to our fourth point: God reveals His power (verse 6b). The whole reason why the Jewish people were to celebrate the Passover was to tell the children about God's power in redeeming them from slavery in Egypt. If you ever have the opportunity to celebrate a Seder meal with a Jewish family today, take that opportunity. You will learn much about the Exodus and how big this event was for the Jews, for the whole dinner is centered around the retelling of this story. Through extensive symbolism, they will describe many of the events that took place with the account of the Exodus. Salt water is used to represent the Jewish tears during the Egyptian bondage. Bitter herbs and horseradish are served to represent how the time of slavery was bitter. They will serve a mixture of chopped apple, nuts, and cinnamon, which represents the mortar used by Israel in building the buildings. At one point in the meal, they remind themselves of the ten plagues, by recalling each of them to mind. Throughout the meal, they eat only unleavened bread, as it reminds them of how the original meal was eaten in haste (Ex. 12:11). At four different points in the meal, a cup of wine is toasted, as four of the promises of Exodus 6:6-7 are repeated. The very last thing that is eaten is the last remains of the unleavened bread. It is broken and distributed to all to eat. This is followed by a final drink of wine from the cup, as a blessing is said.

Perhaps you remember on the night in which Jesus was betrayed, He ate a meal with His disciples. It was the Passover meal. Perhaps you remember the very last thing that Jesus did at this meal. He took bread, broke it up and distributed it to all. He took the cup, offered a blessing, and encouraged His disciples to drink. But, at this Passover meal, Jesus added a few things that were never done before. Jesus said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24). Jesus held up the cups and said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:25). The symbolism of what Jesus did was rich! He was saying that the Passover rite should be changed. No longer should you tell your children of everything that God did for you during your redemption from Egypt. Rather, you should tell of the redemption that you have in Jesus Christ. The bread and the cup should be in remembrance of Jesus, rather than of Moses. This is because Jesus is our Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). It is on account of His blood that God will "pass over" our sin.

We are in the same danger as the people living in Egypt were some 3400 years ago. The LORD was going through the land, visiting every household and bringing death to the firstborn within the home. The only escape was the blood of the lamb applied to the doorpost of the house. So also can we expect a visit someday from the LORD. Due to our sin, we deserve death and punishment, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a). And the only way to escape such a fate is the blood of the Lamb applied to our lives. "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:23b).

When you believe in Jesus Christ, it is as if God takes His blood and applies it to the door post of your life. When God looks upon you, He will "pass over" your sin. Rather than dying in your sin, you will be redeemed. You will be set free. This is the glories of the gospel of Christ! John the Baptist called Jesus, "The lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). You simply need to believe in the Son of God and your sins will be wiped away, and you will be redeemed from your bondage to sin. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). The gospel of John was written, "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on January 22, 2006 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Walter Kaiser claims that this promise is made almost 50 times in the Bible (The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 2, page 341).