

# **Sermon: 7 comparisons, Exodus and Jesus**

## **Exodus 12:1-14; John 13:1-17, 31b-35; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

*Rev Dr Jos Strengholt*

Jesus and his disciples were together for their last supper. In the midst of the loud noise of the city that housed many, many pilgrims who had come for the Jewish Passover feast, they had some quiet time together.

Just as we here have withdrawn for a short time from the noise and busyness of life, to be with our Lord and with each other.

Later that same night Jesus would be betrayed and arrested. But now they gathered together around the table to celebrate the feast of Passover. It was during this feast that Israel remembered the event described in Exodus 12.

The Passover was a celebration of salvation. Israel needed salvation. They needed to be saved from the gods of Egypt, from how they themselves had become involved with the religion of Egypt; they also had to be saved from the oppression of the Egyptians.

The Passover was a significant event to remember. It was, however, only a shadow of the reality of what our Lord Jesus Christ would do for us through his death on the cross. Exodus 12 contains many elements that point to greater events to come in the Passion of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus shared this last Passover feast with his disciples, he made it clear how he himself was the reality that was foreshadowed in the feast that they celebrated together.

Let us look together at seven shadows in Exodus 12 that found their fulfillment in the reality of Jesus Christ.

And I will ask you seven personal questions.

### **1. Perfect lamb.**

First, every Jewish man had to take a perfect lamb, kill it, and eat it. In the religion of Israel, forgiveness and salvation were impossible without the slaughter of an innocent, perfect lamb.

Jesus and his disciples were eating together, remembering the lamb that had to be killed on the first Jewish Passover.

The disciples of Jesus were not aware how special this moment was. Because Jesus would, the day thereafter, become the perfect Lamb of God who would be killed by the people. 'See the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world', John the Baptist had cried out, pointing at Jesus.

He was perfect - unlike us, mere humans. We are - like Israel in those old days - in slavery to sin. We tend to worship the idols of money, entertainment, the idol of me, myself and I, and we tend to adopt the culture of the spiritual Egypt around us. God tells us to leave the lifestyle of the world we live in, but that seems so hard for us. We do not love God and we do not love our neighbor very much, do we?

But Jesus, the Lamb of God - He lived a perfect life, and even in his death he loved and served God.

QUESTION: In the light of our perfect Lord, do you see and admit your own imperfection? Your sins?

### **2. Eat the lamb**

Secondly; the Israelites had to eat the lamb. Imagine these Israelites in their families, in their homes in Egypt... all nervous to travel, with their suitcases ready. And before they could go, they had to have a good meal.

They had to eat the animal to give them strength for the journey ahead of them.

Jesus and the disciples praised God for how he had saved Israel from Egypt, long ago. And Jesus knew what he had to do in the days ahead. He had previously told his disciples, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them". That sounds awful, and it is.

It means very graphically, that we depend on the death of Jesus. There is nothing sweet or nice about this. We live because he dies; he dies so that we may live. Our sins have brought him to the cross. Spiritually, we are part of the crowd that is responsible for his crucifixion.

QUESTION: Do you realize the painful truth that your salvation is only possible through the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God?

### **3. The blood**

Thirdly, it was not enough for the lamb to be killed and eaten; Israel was told to smear the blood of the lamb on the doorposts.

The New Testament also often speaks of the blood of Jesus Christ. "If we walk in the light, just as God is light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus the Son of God cleanses us from all sin."

It is not enough for the lamb to die; it is not enough for Jesus to die. His death - his blood - must be applied to our own doorposts. We must personally believe in him, for his death to become effective for us.

This is incredibly important for us today. Certainly, Jesus, the Lamb of God died for the whole world. But we must apply this truth to our own lives, by having faith in him and by obeying him.

QUESTION: Have you ever come to that point where you said to Jesus: 'You died for the sins of the world, and also for mine - I believe in you Lord'?

### **4. Saved from God's vengeance**

Four: the reason why smearing the blood on the doorposts was so important in Israel was that God would pass through the country of Egypt to punish the gods and punish the people for how badly they treated the children of Israel.

And God would pass over any home where blood had been applied to the doorposts. Because those who had blood on the doorposts showed their obedience to God and their faith in his word and in his salvation.

The idea that God judges is not just an Old Testament concept. Judgement is just as much part of the message of the New Testament and of Jesus. The one who loves us, and who has freed us by his blood, also says that He will come to judge the living and the dead.

So we better be prepared, by embracing our Savior in faith. Then we are assured that we are safe. "Whoever believes in him is not condemned", we read in John 3:18, "but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

QUESTION: Are you sure that you are safe in the arms of Jesus your savior? If not, you have to reconsider my first three questions, acknowledging your own sin, and trusting in Christ and accepting His perfect sacrifice for you.

## **5. Urgency**

Lesson five - the Israelites had to be eating their meal while standing, ready to go. Even while eating in their homes, they had to be ready, prepared to move at any moment. Their cloak tucked into their belt, sandals on the feet, staff in their hand.

There was urgency – the vengeance of God was on the way and the Israelites had to escape through the Red Sea and into the Promised Land.

For Jesus too, there was urgency: he knew that the people who wanted to arrest him would do so that same night.

There is urgency for us as well. The choice is between living in spiritual Egypt - and to die spiritually; or to die with Jesus Christ, to our own worn out temporal life, in order to receive eternal life from God.

There is urgency - even in your life. Do not postpone the things you must do to be reconciled with God. Make a new beginning. The feast of Passover was the beginning of the Jewish new year, a new start. God can make our lives new, through Jesus Christ.

What he did for the whole world must be applied to our own lives, by faith, demonstrated by our readiness to move immediately, to obey our Lord, to follow him out of the darkness of Egypt into the land of obedience to our Lord.

QUESTION: Have you made up your mind to live for God and for God alone?

## **6. Memorial**

Point 6 - Israel had to celebrate Passover as an annual memorial day, a feast to the Lord throughout the generations. That is why Jesus and the disciples were together.

And during the meal, Jesus broke bread and told his disciples to eat it as his body, and they were told to drink the wine as his blood. "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Jesus shifted the meaning of the Jewish Passover to Holy Eucharist. No longer do we celebrate that God saved Israel from Egypt, but we celebrate that Jesus saved us from our sins, from evil, from God's wrath. This is a much greater salvation.

We celebrate this each year in the Easter season, but also, every week, in Holy Eucharist. We eat his body, and we drink his blood, given for our salvation and also to nourish and strengthen us on the way. Today we celebrate this again.

QUESTION: Will you, in order to be strengthened by God, celebrate Holy Eucharist as often as you can, and avoid skipping church?

## **7. Community feast**

Finally, the feast of Israel was a community feast. It was celebrated as a nation, by all families. It was not private. It was done together. And when Jesus and his disciples celebrated the feast, Jesus himself underlined the importance of this togetherness of his followers, of us, who believe in him.

He spoke of the need for us to serve and to love and to forgive, and he showed his love. He became the servant of us all. During the meal he gave beautiful expression to this. He bowed down before his disciples to wash their feet. That was the work of slaves - but Jesus, the Son of God did it for us.

He made us into the people of God, one holy nation of those who follow him. And in this community, when we have problems with each other, we forgive. We serve. We love each other. Just as Jesus served us, loved us, and forgave us.

To underline our need to love and serve and forgive, Jesus stooped down and washed the feet of his disciples. And in order to impress on us the urgency to do the same, Rev Hassan and I will wash your feet tonight. As an object lesson in what our Lord did for us, and what he wants us to do for each other - to love, serve and forgive.

QUESTION: How will you make the community of your church stronger by your love and service and forgiveness of others?

**So, concluding, seven important lessons for us:**

God's wrath is real; he does not accept our sinful darkness. But we are safe in Jesus Christ, trusting in what He did for us. He is our perfect Lamb of God who died for our sins.

We celebrate this, every year with Easter and every week in Holy Eucharist. We eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus, who saved us and who gives us strength for the road.

The road that we walk on together with Jesus is the road of loving each other, serving each other, forgiving each other. For people on this road there is no condemnation, but only God's loving embrace.

**+ in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**