

meticulousity

exodus 12.1-28

Find your way to Exodus chapter 12.

Last week the Lord announced the final plague that was coming that night to Egypt and He told His people to really start getting ready to go out of the land.

Devotionally, these hours before the death angel was to arrive remind me of the time we're in right now. The Lord has put us on notice that He is imminently coming to rapture us home to heaven.

As an aside, it's interesting to me that often times in the Bible when there comes the dawn of a new era for God's people, it is preceded by a meal. Here, before the exodus, there's the Passover meal. Before the crucifixion Jesus shared the last supper with His disciples and established The Lord's Supper for us to commemorate, and at the end of the Bible we see the beginning of eternity marked with the wedding feast of the Lamb with His Bride. I'm sure there's a study in there somewhere, but fun to think about.

At any rate, what God has told us concerning the rapture is very similar to what He told the Israelites before the exodus, and that was to **be ready!** In the New Testament this message is very clear. Using the language of Jesus, we're to watch and take heed and trim our wicks and keep oil in our lamps and be ready for the inevitable moment of the Lord coming to call us out of this world and into the home He's been preparing for us.

Here in this passage we can get some ideas about how to keep ourselves ready for the Master's return by seeing how the Israelites got themselves ready for the exodus from Egypt. And if there's one word that we could use to sum up their attitude and behavior, I think the word 'meticulous' is definitely in the running. God had told them that, "Tonight's the night. It's all going down. You're getting out of here, so I want you to make some meticulous adjustments to your life in order to be ready for when it happens."

So let's see if we can't pull a few principles out of these preparations.

Start in verse 1:

Exodus 12.1-2 - Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.

First of all, God wanted them to re-orient their calendar around this moment. He wanted the beginning of each year to commemorate His deliverance and power and faithfulness.

That means we need to start spiritual. Each day when we wake up, we need to start spiritual. I don't mean that you have to do devotions in the morning, I mean we need to wake up to the

understanding that today I'm meant to walk with God and serve God and love the world around me. The plans I make need to be made spiritually. The adventures I go on need to be spiritual adventures. If I'm starting a new phase of life, it should be something that was born out of my spiritual relationship with Christ. Because all that we do is supposed to be unto the Lord, and so everything we *start* should start from a spiritual foundation and head in a spiritual direction. That's how the Lord wants us to begin things in our lives.

Exodus 12.3-5 - Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

There was one more meal in Egypt and the Lord wanted them to make a meticulous choice from among the flocks.

God wants us to make meticulous choices because those choices lead us down a variety of paths. And our choices broadcast a message to the world around us. So, as I'm making a selection in life, the way I make that selection is by meticulously evaluating it using Biblical criteria, some of which we see here. Is this choice fit for a sanctified disciple of Christ? Is this choice pure? Is it above reproach? Will this choice help and bless my neighbor? If the answer to those questions is 'no', then the choice before us won't lead us nearer to God, but further from Him.

And, it's also essential for us to remember that our choices broadcast a message to the world around us. That's why Paul the apostle was so meticulous about Christian liberty. He said, "Look, there is liberty, but your liberties must always be second to the message of the Gospel and your ministry to others. And if my liberty distracts a person from God or sends a mixed message to them about what it means to be holy, then I just won't do it anymore."

We want to be meticulous in our choices.

Exodus 12.6-7, 12-13 - Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it...'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Here we see that there was a meticulous decoration to be applied to the homes of the Israelites. Now, in this case the new paint scheme served a very practical and very serious purpose, but it's a good reminder to us that we should be very careful and intentional about the things that adorn our lives. We think of the teaching and analogy in the Bible that presents life like a building project. Scripture says that we're given the foundation of Christ to build upon. And Paul talks about what we build and the materials we use to construct and decorate our

lives. And what the Bible says is that the Lord evaluates those things and He strips away what is not lovely, what's not Godly and, at the end of our lives, He burns those things. Instead, He invites us to adorn our lives with the jewels and crowns of heaven. We should decorate our lives with the things that are going to last forever.

From our text we see that proper, Godly decoration in our lives is always going to include sacrifice. Taking precious things like time and money and energy and using them to adorn our lives with the service of God. It means sacrificing the pursuit of self. Taking up our cross so that the Lord can reign and be the standard on our mantle and our on doorposts. Meticulously decorating our lives with eternal adornments, rather than temporal ones.

Exodus 12.8-11 - Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails. You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.

Here we see the Lord calling His people to meticulous consumption. Not only did it matter what they ate, it mattered *how* they ate it.

The things I take in, the things I consume should be fueling me for my race to the finish. The Israelites were going to need a quick meal, but a substantive meal for their journey out of Egypt. The New Testament says that we're running a race, pressing on toward the finish line. So, my consumption needs to be propelling me forward, not tying me down. Which means I need to pay careful attention to what I'm taking in so that it's not bogging me down, tripping me up, making my vision hazy, or anything that decreases my intensity for Jesus. And I have found in my own life that there is a direct connection between my mental consumption and my spiritual enthusiasm. We need to be careful about the things we're consuming. What's consuming our thoughts? What's consuming our time? What's consuming our passion? What's consuming our conversations? Because the writer to the Hebrews and Paul and James and Peter *all* said that we need to lay aside things that are going to ensnare us and decelerate us so that we can move fast and forward.

Exodus 12.14-20 - 'So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be

cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.’ ”

Lot's of rules for a holiday! It's always fun to listen to someone from another culture try to explain their holidays, because they never make sense. And, ours aren't any better. But here's what I think we can pull out of this section: the children of Israel were called to meticulous celebration.

Now, obviously, Passover is a uniquely Jewish event. But these verses remind me that my celebration matters to God as much as my affliction does. And we should celebrate meticulously in ways that preach and that draw us nearer to God. Celebration is a good thing and we should do it all the time. But, on a spiritual level, the enjoyable times of our lives shouldn't be different than the difficult times. Our celebrations should preach the Lord. And they should draw us nearer to Him. We do that by celebrating who God is and what He's done, rather than simply celebrating pleasure. When we want to enjoy life, the real way to do it is by drawing near to God. Because the Bible says:

Psalm 16.11b - In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

The mistake Christians make is when we separate enjoyment from our spirituality and we turn to physical pleasures alone in celebration. When all the while the Lord wants to give us incredible celebration, incredible joy, pleasures forevermore in ways that bring real fulfillment and in ways that preach to the world around us.

The Passover was meant to be a wonderful time. Solemn in some ways, but a celebration of God's provision and mercy and deliverance. So God's people were called to a meticulous celebration.

Exodus 12.21-28 - Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. It will come to pass when you come to the land which the Lord will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.’ ” So the people bowed their heads and worshiped. Then the children of Israel went away and did so; just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

Here we see a meticulous compliance. Just as the Lord had commanded, so they did.

We are men under orders. We're in the era of grace, of course. But this isn't peace time and we're not on leave. It's war time and we've been called to the front. We've been given orders that we must carry out - commands from our Commander. The question for us in light of the Israelites' obedience is: ***Am I doing what I've been told to do?*** Am I carefully, purposefully, faithfully complying with the commands of Jesus Christ? Or have I stepped into a way of life where grace has become license to live like a soldier who's gone AWOL?

Without burdening us this morning, and I really hope I haven't, all these things that keep us ready for the Lord's return for us are things He helps us to do. They're all things we're empowered to do by the Spirit. They're reasonable, attainable things. But the Lord ***IS*** coming. And we want to be ready. We stay ready not by living a sloppy Christianity. Not by being careless and inattentive to our spiritual lives, but by showing great attention to the details of our lives. Following the Lord purposefully and precisely. That's how a servant stays ready. That's how a servant stays profitable. That's how we keep ourselves in the place we want to be.