

Maundy Thursday

A PROMISE AND A NEW PROMISE

Exodus 12.1-4, 11-14

Maundy Thursday

Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: 2This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. 3Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. 4If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. 11This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. 12For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. 13The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. 14This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

DIAGNOSIS: Slavery

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Slavery of the*

Body

In the land of Egypt the people of Israel were slaves. They had cried out to the Lord and the Lord had heard their cry. The Lord sent Moses and Aaron to tell Pharaoh to “let my people go.” Pharaoh refused.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Slavery of the Heart*

There were “gods” in Egypt that Pharaoh relied on to back him up in his determination to keep the people of Israel as slaves. Pharaoh’s heart was hardened against the Lord and Moses and Aaron. Even after nine plagues that had caused fear and pain in the Egyptians, Pharaoh refused to let the people of Israel go. After all, the plagues ended when Pharaoh at first agreed to let the people of Israel go, but when the plagues stopped, Pharaoh would change his mind and again refuse to let the people of Israel go. He was dealing with Moses and Moses’ God. Surely Pharaoh’s gods were greater than this Moses, son of a slave, while the Pharaoh was the son of a god.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Slaves to Death*

Pharaoh had to deal with the LORD, not just Moses. Moses and how he looked, how he stammered, how he trembled, were not what the LORD looked like. The LORD was hidden behind Moses so Pharaoh could not see the LORD. It was the LORD who was God of life and death. It was the LORD that would execute judgments on all the gods of Egypt. Those judgments were death, death to the gods and death to all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.

PROGNOSIS: Freed from Slavery

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *God’s Promise to Save*

God promised the people of Israel, through Moses, to save them from the LORD’s judgment of death against every firstborn in the land of Egypt. God told Moses that the way God would save them

from God's judgment of death was by the people of Israel slaughtering a lamb and then painting the blood of the lamb on each house of every family of the people of Israel. God promised that the blood would be a sign to God and God would pass over the house that trusted God's promise of salvation. The one Lamb that finally took away not only Israel's sin, but the sin of the whole world, was Jesus. His blood for our lives.

Step 5. Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) : *Freedom of the Heart*

The people of Israel painted blood on their houses and the LORD with his judgment of death passed over their houses. The people trusted God's promise, and moved from slavery into freedom. So each of us goes every day, moving in faith from the slavery of believing something other than God is God; moving toward the freedom of trusting that the God who not only promises deliverance, but provides the sacrifice, is a God who truly frees.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Freedom to Live under God's Promise*

Even more, God promised the people of Israel God would always keep them safe from slavery. Trust in that promise of God was lived out in one way by the people having a festival at the beginning of each year that they were to remember that day of salvation with a festival. That festival held every year would be held as a perpetual ordinance, in other words, God's promise would always be there. God's first people lived out this promise by making a law to never make a person of Israel a slave. New generations have found other ways to embrace God's promise by embracing freedom for others—from slavery, poverty, racial and other biases and more.

Odd, though, the people freed from slavery were the ones who were judged as lacking faith in God because they complained and

did not trust God to provide them food during their journey through the desert. They too had the judgment of death happen to them.

On Maundy Thursday we hear Jesus give us a new commandment, a new promise. Jesus promised to give us his love, thus filling us with his love so we could use it to love one another. Jesus gave all people, not just the people in slavery in Egypt, a new promise. Jesus' new promise was the new promise in his blood, not a lamb's, shed for all people for the forgiveness of sin (that lack of faith in God), which overcomes the judgment of death. We may still die, but those with faith in Christ, even though they die, yet shall they live; and those who believe in Jesus shall never die. And now we live, not only refusing to make each other slaves, but now serving one another according to the each other's needs. God is bound to this promise of forgiveness and life through Jesus' death and rising.