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Andrew M. Davis

Teaching Notes

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Looking Back, Looking Ahead: God Teaches and Leads His People Wisely

Exodus 13

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- I. The Consecration of the Firstborn (vs. 1-2)

Exodus 13:1-2 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal."

- God claims the firstborn to be His own
- This is obviously symbolic: connected to the deliverance of the Passover night... a reminder of the sin of the Israelites and their need for salvation as much as the Egyptians
- The blood of the Passover Lamb really was effective in sparing the lives of the Israelite firstborn... they were not spared because they were physically descended from Abraham, but rather because the blood of the Lamb was shed for them
- Clear point made by Paul

Romans 2:9-11 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism.

Romans 3:22-25 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.

- We tend to think that God spared the firstborn of Israel because they were His chosen people, His adopted nation
- God clearly emphasizes here that the firstborn of Israel also deserved to die, but the blood of the substitute spared their lives
- He will make this point even more clearly in verses 11-13... redemption is expensive
- The consecration of the firstborn is also symbolic of God's ownership of all things, and of the priority love for God should have over all things

Numbers 3:13 for all the firstborn are mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set apart for myself every firstborn in Israel, whether man or animal. They are to be mine. I am the LORD."

Exodus 19:5-6 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

Also clearly taught in the commands to bring the firstfruits of the soil to the Lord's house... it is His

Exodus 23:19 "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.

That is, the giving of firstfruits implies that everything is separated to the Lord... it all belongs to Him

Romans 11:16 If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

- Also the giving of the firstborn to the Lord implies that our love for God is our highest priority in life... we must not love any human, even the precious fruit of the womb, a first child, more than we love Him

Matthew 10:37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"

- YET the joy is that the firstborn are given back to the parents through the death of a substitute (more in a moment)... just as Moses was given away by his mother and she got him back

II. The Commemoration of Unleavened Bread (vs. 3-10)

vs. 3-10 Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast. 4 Today, in the month of Abib, you are leaving. 5 When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites-- the land he swore to your forefathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey-- you are to observe this ceremony in this month: 6 For seven days eat bread made without yeast and on the seventh day hold a festival to the LORD. 7 Eat unleavened bread during those seven days; nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within your borders. 8 On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 9 This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. 10 You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year."

- God clearly wanted the Israelites to remember the Exodus forever... thus (as in chapter 12 with the Passover) God set up a permanent reminder in the establishment of an annual feast
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread is combined with the slaughter of the Passover Lamb
- The prohibition of yeast we already discussed: here a symbol of evil; desire for disconnection from their past lives in Egypt
- Also we have for the first time a clear mention to the people of Israel of the nations the Lord is going to evict before the Israelites
- The nations were listed to Moses as he stood before the burning bush

Exodus 3:8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey-- the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

- A subtle reminder that there are still great works to be done... the Exodus alone was never the point... God brought them out to bring them in
- He reminds them of two great encouragements: the promise made to the forefathers and the goodness and richness of the Promised Land
- Concerning the first, the promise made to the forefathers, God wants them to reflect MUCH on His power and faithfulness to His promises... NOTE: in verse 5, Moses says “WHEN the Lord brings you into the land...” Not “IF the Lord brings you into the land!!” Absolute certainty... Israel’s confidence in God’s promises was essential to their own future
- He knows that His people are weak and skittish... liable to flee at the danger. So He wants to ease them into the military side of this entire enterprise
- He also looks ahead to the rich future they will have in the Promised Land... a land flowing with milk and honey
- So are we to meditate much on God’s power already shown in bringing us this far in our Christian lives, on His faithfulness to finish what He promised, His future power to conquer all the enemies we will face, and the richness of our final resting place
- The establishment of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is also a future festival causing the people to look back, to remember what God had done
- They were to stop consuming all the rich foods of the Promised Land and eat unleavened bread for seven days... to reflect on how far God had brought them
- Looking back every year at the Exodus would give them courage and holiness for the future journey of life... walking in God’s commands until they come to the true inheritance in heaven
- The total removal of all yeast from their borders would be a powerful symbol of holiness every year
- Moses also commands them to teach their children... the son’s question a reminder of the responsibility of godly parents to instruct future generations of God’s past power and faithfulness
- The Feast existed to be a consistent reminder to generation after generation of Jews that God had done this mighty thing... the mighty acts of God in the past were never to be forgotten, because they were to be a ground for present obedience and joyful worship

vs. 9-10 This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year.

- GOD NEVER CHANGES... He is as powerful and holy now as He was then!! But we forgetful human beings need the consistent reminders
- Finally, note that the Lord is already preparing them for the need to obey His Laws in the Promised Land... the Law is mentioned in verse 9 even before they came to Sinai; Exodus 12:49 and 13:9 are the very first times the word "Law" (as God's Law for His people) is mentioned in the Bible
- The Law was to be constantly in the minds and on their lips... meditated on and spoken

III. The Cost of Redemption: Death for the Substitute (vs. 11-13)

vs. 11-13 *"After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your forefathers, 12 you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. 13 Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons.*

- The principle of redemption is also established here... the death of a substitute to redeem or buy out of danger the one being saved
- So also Israel was redeemed from the Land of Slavery... brought out when the Passover Lamb was sacrificed in their place

Deuteronomy 7:8 *But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

Deuteronomy 15:15 *Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you.*

- It is on this basis that we are saved... the precious blood of Christ redeeming us from sin

Matthew 20:28 *just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Galatians 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

1 Peter 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

- The principle of redemption also set up clearly in laws about the Levites:

Numbers 8:15-18 "After you have purified the Levites and presented them as a wave offering, they are to come to do their work at the Tent of Meeting. 16 They are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to me. I have taken them as my own in place of the firstborn, the first male offspring from every Israelite woman. 17 Every firstborn male in Israel, whether man or animal, is mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set them apart for myself. 18 And I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons in Israel.

- Without the redemption, there is only one possibility: death... thus is the donkey's neck broken
- Redemption is expensive: death for the lamb. No redemption without the payment of the redemption price

IV. The Consistent Reminder of the Exodus (vs. 14-16)

vs. 14-16 "In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.' 16 And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand."

- The ongoing sacrifice of every firstborn from the womb was expensive... costly; But all of it belonged to God anyway
- Furthermore, each time a new animal was born and immediately sacrificed, there would be yet another teaching opportunity for the questioning son
- The son would make the connection: "But father, I am firstborn!" The father would then explain how the lamb was sacrificed for him as well
- A consistent reminder of the Exodus, and of substitutionary atonement
- The "reminder" would be consistent, as it a sign on their hand and forehead

V. The Concern of the Lord: A Wise Path for His People (vs. 17-18)

vs. 17-18 "When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they

might change their minds and return to Egypt." 18 So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle.

- God is very wise in how much He puts us through at any given time
- Here, God's concern is that Israel will immediately lose heart and flee
- He was not looking for the shortest route but for the wisest route
- His wisdom focuses on Israel's weakness and their fears
- He tailors the course they would take to their own needs, their own weaknesses
- NOTE: they did leave Egypt armed for battle, but they weren't ready for it yet
- While they wandered in the desert, God would prepare Israel for battle by leading them through certain smaller battles, building up their confidence and training; Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, King of Bashan
- So He dealt with David when he was a shepherd boy, giving him a chance to kill the lion and the bear before facing Goliath

Psalm 144:1 Of David. Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle.

- So Christ dealt with His disciples the night He was arrested:

John 18:7-9 Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." 9 This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

Later, Peter would be ready to face death... just not that night

John 21:18-19 I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

- So also God wisely deals with us in our daily Christian lives:

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

VI. The Commitment to Joseph Fulfilled (vs. 19)

vs. 19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He had said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place."

- This was a promise made hundreds of years before to Joseph

Genesis 50:24-26 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." 25 And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place." 26 So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

- The request itself was great evidence of Joseph's faith in God's promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and his father Jacob

Hebrews 11:22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

- This also shows the significance of burial to the Jews: evidence of their great concern for the fulfillment of God's promise

VII. The Constant Leadership of the Lord (vs. 20-22)

vs. 20-22 After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. 21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

- Here begins the clear demonstration of God's constant leadership of His people by the wise path He's chosen

- The clear visible demonstration of this leadership was the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day
- Numbers 9 makes this guidance very obvious

Numbers 9:15-23 On the day the tabernacle, the Tent of the Testimony, was set up, the cloud covered it. From evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire. 16 That is how it continued to be; the cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire. 17 Whenever the cloud lifted from above the Tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped. 18 At the LORD's command the Israelites set out, and at his command they encamped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. 19 When the cloud remained over the tabernacle a long time, the Israelites obeyed the LORD's order and did not set out. 20 Sometimes the cloud was over the tabernacle only a few days; at the LORD's command they would encamp, and then at his command they would set out. 21 Sometimes the cloud stayed only from evening till morning, and when it lifted in the morning, they set out. Whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud lifted, they set out. 22 Whether the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for two days or a month or a year, the Israelites would remain in camp and not set out; but when it lifted, they would set out. 23 At the LORD's command they encamped, and at the LORD's command they set out. They obeyed the LORD's order, in accordance with his command through Moses.

- So also God's wisdom and leadership constantly guides us in our daily lives
- We hear the voice behind us saying "This is the way, walk in it."
- We see that the Lord is our Shepherd, He leads me beside quiet water
- The strong theme is established in "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
 Pilgrim through this barren land.
 I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
 Hold me with Thy powerful hand.
 Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
 Feed me till I want no more;
 Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
 Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar

Lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield;
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.