

# CHAPTER 13

In this chapter we have,

- I.** The commands God gave to Israel,
  - 1.** To sanctify all their firstborn to him (v. 1, 2).
  - 2.** To be sure to remember their deliverance out of Egypt (v. 3, 4), and, in remembrance of it, to keep the feast of unleavened bread (v. 5-7).
  - 3.** To transmit the knowledge of it with all possible care to their children (v. 8-10).
  - 4.** To set apart unto God the firstlings of their cattle (v. 11-13), and to explain that also to their children (v. 14-16).
- II.** The care God took of Israel, when he had brought them out of Egypt.
  - 1.** Choosing their way for them (v. 17, 18).
  - 2.** Guiding them in the way (v. 20-22). And
- III.** Their care of Joseph's bones (v. 19).

## EXODUS 13:1-10

### THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE FIRSTBORN

Care is here taken to perpetuate the remembrance,

**I.** Of the preservation of Israel's firstborn, when the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain. In memory of that distinguishing favour, and in gratitude for it, the firstborn, in all ages, were to be consecrated to God, as his peculiars (v. 2), and to be redeemed, v. 13. God, who by the right of creation is proprietor and sovereign of all the creatures, here lays claim in particular to the firstborn of the Israelites, by right of protection: *Sanctify to me all the firstborn*. The parents were not to look upon themselves as interested in their firstborn, till they had first solemnly presented them to God, recognized his title to them, and received them back, at a certain rate, from him again. Note,

1. That which is by special distinguishing mercy spared to us should be in a peculiar manner dedicated to God's honour; at least some grateful acknowledgment, in works of piety and charity, should be made, when our lives, or the lives of our children, have been given us for a prey.

2. God, who is the first and best, should have the first and best, and to him we should resign that which is most dear to us, and most valuable. The firstborn were the joy and hope of their families. Therefore *they shall be mine*, says God. By this it will appear that we love God best (as we ought) if we are willing to part with that to him which we love best in this world.

3. It is the *church of the firstborn* that is sanctified to God, <sup>5023</sup> Hebrews 12:23. Christ is the *firstborn among many brethren* (<sup>489</sup> Romans 8:29), and, by virtue of their union with him, all that are born again, and born from above, are accounted as firstborn. There is an *excellency of dignity and power* belonging to them; and, *if children, then heirs*.

II. The remembrance of their coming out of Egypt must also be perpetuated: "*Remember this day*, v. 3. Remember it by a good token, as the most remarkable day of your lives, the birthday of your nation, or the day of its coming of age, to be no longer under the rod." Thus the day of Christ's resurrection is to be remembered, for in it we were raised up with Christ out of death's *house of bondage*. The scripture tells us not expressly what day of the *year* Christ rose (as Moses told the Israelites what day of the year they were brought out of Egypt, that they might remember it yearly), but very particularly what day of the *week* it was, plainly intimating that, as the more valuable deliverance, and of greater importance, it should be remembered *weekly*. Remember it, for *by strength of hand the Lord brought you out*. Note, The more of God and his power appears in any deliverance, the more memorable it is. Now, that it might be remembered,

1. They must be sure to *keep the feast of unleavened bread*, v. 5-7. It was not enough that they remembered it, but they must celebrate the memorial of it in that way which God had appointed, and use the instituted means of preserving the remembrance of it. So, under the gospel, we must not only remember Christ, but *do this in remembrance* of him. Observe, How strict the prohibition of leaven is (v. 7); not only no leaven must be eaten, but none must be seen, no, not in all their quarters. Accordingly, the Jews' usage was, before the feast of the passover, to cast all the leavened bread

out of their houses: they burnt it, or buried it, or broke it small and scattered it in the wind; they searched diligently with lighted candles in all the corners of their houses, lest any leaven should remain. The care and strictness enjoined in this matter were designed,

(1.) To make the feast the more solemn, and consequently the more taken notice of by their children, who would ask, “Why is so much ado made?”

(2.) To teach us how solicitous we should be to put away from us all sin, ~~1~~1 Corinthians 5:7.

2. They must instruct their children in the meaning of it, and relate to them the story of their deliverance out of Egypt, v. 8. Note,

(1.) Care must be taken betimes to instruct children in the knowledge of God. Here is an ancient law for catechising.

(2.) It is particularly of great use to acquaint children betimes with the stories of the scripture, and to make them familiar to them.

(3.) It is a debt we owe to the honour of God, and to the benefit of our children's souls, to tell them of the great works God has done for his church, both those which we have seen with our eyes done in our day and which we have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us: *Thou shalt show thy son in that day* (the day of the feast) these things. When they were celebrating the ordinance, they must explain it. *Every thing is beautiful in its season.* The passover is appointed *for a sign, and for a memorial, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth.* Note, We must retain the remembrance of God's works, that we may remain under the influence of God's law. And those that have God's law in their heart should have it in their mouth, and be often speaking of it, the more to affect themselves and to instruct others.

## ~~213~~ EXODUS 13:11-16

### GOD'S CLAIM UPON THE FIRSTBORN

Here we have,

**I.** Further directions concerning the dedicating of their firstborn to God.

**1.** The firstlings of their cattle were to be dedicated to God, as part of their possessions. Those of clean beasts — calves, lambs, and kids — if males, were to be sacrificed, <sup><0220></sup>Exodus 22:30; <sup><0187></sup>Numbers 18:17, 18. Those of unclean beasts, as colts, were to be redeemed with a lamb, or knocked on the head. For whatsoever is unclean (as we all are by nature), if it be not redeemed, will be destroyed, v. 11, 13.

**2.** The firstborn of their children were to be redeemed, and by no means sacrificed, as the Gentiles sacrificed their children to Moloch. The price of the redemption of the firstborn was fixed by the law (<sup><0186></sup>Numbers 18:16) at *five shekles*. We were all obnoxious to the wrath and curse of God; by the blood of Christ we are redeemed, that we may be joined to the *church of the firstborn*. They were to redeem their children, as well as the firstlings of the unclean beasts, for our children are by nature polluted. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*

**II.** Further directions concerning the catechising of their children, and all those of the rising generation, from time to time, in this matter. It is supposed that, when they saw all the firstlings thus devoted, they would ask the meaning of it, and their parents and teachers must tell them (v. 14-16) that God's special propriety in their firstborn, and all their firstlings, was founded in his special preservation of them from the sword of the destroying angel. Being thus delivered, they must serve him. Note,

**1.** Children should be directed and encouraged to ask their parents questions concerning the things of God, a practice which would be perhaps of all others the most profitable way of catechising; and parents must furnish themselves with useful knowledge, that they may be ready always to give an answer to their enquiries. If ever the *knowledge of God cover the earth*, as the waters do the sea, the fountains of family-instruction must first be broken up.

**2.** We should all be able to show cause for what we do in religion. As sacraments are sanctified by the word, so they must be explained and understood by it. God's service is reasonable, and it is then acceptable when we perform it intelligently, knowing what we do and why we do it.

**3.** It must be observed how often it is said in this chapter that *by strength of hand* (v. 3, 14, 16), *with a strong hand* (v. 9), the Lord brought them out of Egypt. The more opposition is given to the accomplishment of God's purposes the more is his power magnified therein. It is a strong hand that

conquers hard hearts. Sometimes God is said to work deliverance *not by might nor power* (<sup>3906</sup>Zechariah 4:6), not by such visible displays of his power as that recorded here.

4. Their posterity that should be born in Canaan are directed to say, *The Lord brought us out of Egypt*, v. 14, 16. Mercies to our fathers are mercies to us; we reap the benefit of them, and therefore must keep up a grateful remembrance of them. We stand upon the bottom of former deliverances, and were in the loins of our ancestors when they were delivered. Much more reason have we to say that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we were redeemed.

## ~~EXODUS~~ EXODUS 13:17-22

### THE PILLAR OF CLOUD AND FIRE

Here is,

1. The choice God made of their way, v. 17, 18. He was their guide. Moses gave them direction but as he received it from the Lord. Note, The way of man is not in himself, <sup>2403</sup>Jeremiah 10:23. He may *devise his way*, and design it; but, after all, it is God that *directs his steps*, <sup>3169</sup>Proverbs 16:9. Man proposes, but God disposes, and in his disposal we must acquiesce, and set ourselves to follow providence. There were two ways from Egypt to Canaan. One was a short cut from the north of Egypt to the south of Canaan, perhaps about four or five days' journey; the other was much further about, through the wilderness, and that was the way in which God chose to lead his people Israel, v. 18.

1. There were many reasons why God led them *through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea*. The Egyptians were to be drowned in the Red Sea. The Israelites were to be humbled and proved in the wilderness, <sup>8000</sup>Deuteronomy 8:2. God had given it to Moses for a sign (<sup>0152</sup>Exodus 3:12), *You shall serve God in this mountain*. They had again and again told Pharaoh that they must go *three days' journey into the wilderness to do sacrifice*, and therefore it was requisite that they should bend their march that way, else they would justly have been exclaimed against as notorious dissemblers. Before they entered the lists with their enemies, matters must be settled between them and their God, laws must be given,

ordinances instituted, covenants sealed, and the original contract ratified, for the doing of which it was necessary that they should retire into the solitudes of a wilderness, the only closet for such a crowd; the high road would be no proper place for these transactions. It is said (<sup><4521></sup>Deuteronomy 32:10), *He led them about*, some hundreds of miles about, and yet (<sup><4521></sup>Psalm 107:7), *He led them forth by the right way*. God's way is the right way, though it seem *about*. If we think he leads not his people the nearest way, yet we may be sure he leads them the best way, and so it will appear when we come to our journey's end. *Judge nothing before the time*.

2. There was one reason why God did not lead them the nearest way, which would have brought them after a few days' march to *the land of the Philistines* (for it was that part of Canaan that lay next to Egypt), namely, because they were not as yet fit for war, much less for war with the Philistines, v. 17. Their spirits were broken with slavery; it was not easy for them to turn their hands of a sudden from the trowel to the sword. The Philistines were formidable enemies, too fierce to be encountered by raw recruits; it was more suitable that they should begin with the Amalekites, and be prepared for the wars of Canaan by experiencing the difficulties of the wilderness. Note, God proportions his people's trials to their strength, and will *not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able*, <sup><4113></sup>1 Corinthians 10:13. That promise, if compared with the foregoing verses, will seem to refer to this event, as an instance of it. *God knows our frame*, and considers our weakness and faintheartedness, and by less trials will prepare us for greater. God is said to bring Israel out of Egypt as the eagle *brings up her young ones* (<sup><4521></sup>Deuteronomy 32:11), teaching them by degrees to fly. Orders being thus given which way they should go, we are told,

(1.) That they went up themselves, not as a confused rout, but in good order, rank and file: they *went up harnessed*, v. 18. They went up by *five in a rank* (so some), in *five squadrons*, so others. They marched like an army with banners, which added much to their strength and honour.

(2.) That they took the *bones of Joseph* along with them (v. 19), and probably the bones of the rest of Jacob's sons, unless (as some think) they had been privately carried to Canaan (<sup><4476></sup>Acts 7:16), severally as they died. Joseph had particularly appointed that his bones should be carried up when God should visit the (<sup><4115></sup>Genesis 50:25, 26), so that their carrying up

his bones was not only a performance of the oath their fathers had sworn to Joseph, but an acknowledgment of the performance of God's promise to them by Joseph that he would visit them and bring them out of the land of Egypt, and an encouragement to their faith and hope that he would fulfil the other part of the promise, which was to bring them to Canaan, in expectation of which they carried these bones with them while they wandered in the desert. They might think, "Joseph's bones must rest at last, and then we shall." Moses is said to take these bones with him. Moses was now a very great man; so had Joseph been in his day, yet he was now but a box full of dry bones; this was all that remained of him in this world, which might serve for a monitor to Moses to remember his mortality. *I have said, You are gods; it was said so to Moses expressly* (~~Exo~~ Exodus 7:1); *but you shall die like men.*

**II.** Here is the guidance they were blessed with in the way: *The Lord went before them in a pillar*, v. 21, 22. In the first two stages it was enough that God directed Moses whither to march: he knew the country and the road well enough; but now that they had come *to the edge of the wilderness* (v. 20) they would have occasion for a guide; and a very good guide they had, one that was infinitely wise, kind, and faithful: *The Lord went before them*, the *shechinah* (or appearance of the divine Majesty, which was typical of Christ) or a previous manifestation of the eternal Word, which, in the fulness of time, was to be *made flesh*, and  *dwell among us*. Christ was with the church in the wilderness, ~~1Co~~ 1 Corinthians 10:9. Now *their King passed before them, even the Lord on the head of them*, ~~Mic~~ Micah 2:13. Note, Those whom God brings into a wilderness he will not leave nor lose there, but will take care to lead them through it; we may well think it was a very great satisfaction to Moses and the pious Israelites to be sure that they were under divine guidance. Those needed not to fear missing their way who were thus led, nor being lost who were thus directed; those needed not to fear being benighted who were thus illuminated, nor being robbed who were thus protected. Those who make the glory of God their end, and the word of God their rule, the Spirit of God the guide of their affections, and the providence of God the guide of their affairs, may be confident that *the Lord goes before them*, as truly as he went before Israel in the wilderness, though not so sensibly; we must live by faith.

**1.** They had sensible evidences of God's going before them. They all saw an appearance from heaven of a pillar, which in the bright day appeared

cloudy, and in the dark night appeared fiery. We commonly see that that which is a flame in the night is a smoke in the day; so was this. God gave them this ocular demonstration of his presence, in compassion to the infirmity of their faith, and in compliance with that infant state of the church, which needed to be thus lispied to in their own language; but blessed are *those that have not seen and yet have believed* God's gracious presence with them, according to his promise.

**2.** They had sensible effects of God's going before them in this pillar. For,

**(1.)** It led the way in that vast howling wilderness, in which there was no road, no track, no way-mark, of which they had no maps, through which they had no guides. When they marched, this pillar went before them, at the rate that they could follow, and appointed the place of their encampment, as Infinite Wisdom saw fit, which both eased them from care, and secured them from danger, both in moving and in resting.

**(2.)** It sheltered them by day from the heat, which, at some times of the year, was extreme.

**(3.)** It gave them light by night when they had occasion for it, and at all times made their camp pleasant and the wilderness they were in less frightful.

**III.** These were constant standing miracles (v. 22): He *took not away the pillar of cloud*; no, not when they seemed to have less occasion for it, travelling through inhabited countries, no, not when they murmured and were provoking; it never left them, till it brought them to the borders of Canaan. It was a cloud which the wind could not scatter. This favour is acknowledged with thankfulness long afterwards, ~~409~~ Nehemiah 9:19; ~~414~~ Psalm 78:14. There was something spiritual in this pillar of cloud and fire.

**1.** The children of Israel were baptized unto Moses in this cloud, which, some think, distilled dew upon them, ~~410~~ 1 Corinthians 10:2. By coming under this cloud, they signified their putting themselves under the divine guidance and command by the ministry of Moses. Protection draws allegiance; this cloud was the badge of God's protection, and so became the bond of their allegiance. Thus they were initiated, and admitted under that government, now when they were entering upon the wilderness.



**2.** Some make this cloud a type of Christ. The cloud of his human nature was a veil to the light and fire of his divine nature; we find him (~~601~~ Revelation 10:1) *clothed with a cloud, and his feet as pillars of fire.* Christ is our way, the light of our way and the guide of it.

**3.** It signified the special guidance and protection which the church of Christ is under in this world. God himself is the keeper of Israel, and he *neither slumbers nor sleeps*, ~~400~~ Psalm 121:4; ~~277~~ Isaiah 27:3. There is a defence created, not only on Zion's assemblies, but on every dwelling-place in Zion. See ~~204~~ Isaiah 4:5, 6. Nay, every Israelite indeed is hidden under the shadow of God's wings (~~377~~ Psalm 17:8); angels, whose ministry was made use of in this cloud, are employed for their good, and pitch their tents about them. *Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people?*