

8. The first Passover

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Many people think that the OT doesn't have the same depth of theologies as the NT. I used to think that way, too. How wrong I was!

The OT is filled with prophecies of Jesus, about the future events for them – to us, they became accurate historical events and the end times. The more we dig in the OT, the more jewels of God we would find. The chapter 12 of the Book of Exodus is a case in point. It is one of the highlights of the Book.

Many Christians in America don't understand the true meaning of Passover. They tend to think that it is nothing more than a Jewish holiday they cherish.

When Israel entered Egypt for 430 years ago, it was as a family of 70 people. But when they made their exit from Egypt, it was as a nation of 2 million strong.

In his typical Hebrew writing style, Moses give a brief introduction in chapter 11 about the first Passover and he goes into more in-depth detail descriptions in chapter 12. So we will start from the verse 1 of chapter 12.

A. A NEW CALENDAR, A NEW NATION

Exodus 12:1-6 Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 2 "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. 3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: (1) 'On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. 4 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. 5 (2) Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 (3) 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.

The coming deliverance from Egypt is such a significant act that God tells the children of Israel to remake their calendar - the new year will now start with the month of their redemption from Egypt.

We have come to a fateful night in the land of Egypt. The final plague is about to descend upon the entire population in Egypt directly. The Israelites in the land of Goshen were spared during the last three plagues, and God's people were delivered from judgment, but they were not redeemed. Now they have to be redeemed and exhibit faith in the Lord without an exception.

Thousands of lambs must have been slain that evening. These many lambs represented another Lamb. God looked at all of these lambs as that one Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the perfect Passover Lamb offered for us. This feast was pointing to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world.

I'd like to bring these three things to your attention:

1) Chosen before it is slain

Selected on the tenth day, and slain "at twilight" of the fourteenth and fifteenth days, the lamb was set aside for death. So Christ was the Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world.

1 Peter 1:20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you

2) Without blemish

The lamb was to be a male without spot or blemish, a picture of the perfect Lamb of God in whom there was no sin. A spot is an inherited defect. That is equivalent to our sinful nature that we are born with. A blemish is an acquired defect. That would be sins in our lives. For Jesus Christ, He was born without sinful nature, because the Holy Spirit brought Him through a virgin and He had never sinned in His life until He went to the cross. It is no wonder why the Bible calls Jesus the perfect Lamb of God.

1 Peter 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

3) Tested

From the tenth to the fourteenth days, the people watched the lambs to make sure they were satisfactory. Similarly, Christ was tested and watched during His earthly ministry until the day He was crucified.

B. INSTRUCTIONS FOR EATING THE PASSOVER

Exodus 12:7-11 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. 8 Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. 9 Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire--its head with its legs and its entrails. 10 You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. 11 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.

When a Jew applied the blood of the lamb on his door posts and lintel, it is forming a figure of a cross in the doorway.

On Passover day, the Jews were to eat the flesh of the lamb roast with fire. Fire speaks of judgment. There must be judgment for sin. They were to eat the lamb with unleavened bread. Leaven speaks of sin in the Bible, and unleavened bread speaks of Christ without sin we are to feed upon. They were also to partake of this meal with bitter herbs. The bitter herbs go with the idea of redemption and reminding them the bitterness of the time of their slavery in Egypt.

C. THE PROTECTION BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

Exodus 12:12-13 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. 13 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.

The Israelites were not saved because they were the seed of Abraham. If the Egyptians had obeyed God's command, they, too, would have been saved. God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." No one was saved because he was doing the best he could, or because he was honest, or because he was a good person. But anyone could be saved by applying the blood of the lamb on his door posts with a simple obedience.

Let's say there was a Jewish man, the first born of his family, who believe what God said through Moses. But he didn't apply the blood of the lamb on his door post and lintel. What would happen? He would be dead for sure when the death angel came to his house. Why? Because it is one thing to acknowledge the truth, but it is a completely different thing to believe, obey and act upon it. Belief and obedience must go hand in hand. Obedience to the Word of God is faith in action.

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

Now on that night in Egypt, there was the death of the firstborn in every home that was not protected by the blood. Just like that those who don't accept the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on behalf of our sins will be condemned by their own decision and will face eternal death in the Lake of Fire.

Some people say like this, "I know what the Bible says about salvation. But..." Whenever a person says, "But," he just cancels everything mentioned previously. In other words, what he really is saying is that he know what the Bible says about salvation, and the same time he thinks what he believes is accurate and the Bible is wrong. Because there can not be two different truth for the same question. Either the Bible is right or a person's opinion is right. That person is challenging the infallibility of the Word of God. This not only applies the subject of salvation, but also other precepts and principles in the Bible.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Exodus 12:21-22 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. 22 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.

Throughout the Scriptures, hyssop is often used to apply blood for the cleansing of sin. In Leviticus 14:6, the ceremony for the cleansing of a leper used hyssop to apply blood. In Numbers 19:6 hyssop was used for to make the ashes of a red heifer for the water of purification. In Numbers 19:18 hyssop was used to apply the purification water.

Hyssop was even connected with Jesus' great sacrifice for sin. John 19:29 points out when Jesus was offered sour wine to drink on the cross, the sponge soaked with it was put on a bunch of hyssop.

David wrote in his psalm of repentance about using hyssop for cleansing.

Psalms 51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

D. THE MIGHTY WORK BY THE HAND OF GOD

Exodus 12:29-38 And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. 30 So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. 31 Then he called for Moses and Aaron by

night, and said, "Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the Lord as you have said. 32 Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also." 33 And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, having their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders. 35 Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. 36 And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. 37 Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. 38 A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds-- a great deal of livestock.

Pharaoh arrogantly challenged God, "Who is the Lord?" He got the answer loud and clear that night. All the first born in Egypt are dead including his own.

Egypt and Pharaoh would not give God's firstborn – Israel, so God took the firstborn of Egypt as He said before in chapter 4.

In addition to the Israelites that left Egypt, a mixed multitude left with them. They will be the cause of much troubles in the camp of Israel. We will learn more about them in the Book of Numbers.

E. REGULATIONS FOR PASSOVER

Exodus 12:43-51 And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it. 44 But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. 45 A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it. 46 In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. 47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. 48 And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. 49 One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you." 50 Thus all the children of Israel did; as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. 51 And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the Lord brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.

To share in the Passover, one had to make themselves part of the people of Israel. Receiving the covenant of circumcision and taking Passover were all part of the same package. That would be a physical side.

For the spiritual side, God is clearly telling us that unless a person comes to God in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, not of his own good merit or works, he is not one of God's children.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

We find another prophetic verse in v46. None of the bones of the Passover lamb were to be broken. This looks forward to Jesus, the ultimate Passover Lamb, who had not one bone broken even in His crucifixion.

John 19:31-36 Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. 35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. 36 For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "Not one of His bones shall be broken."

When Israel left Egypt, it was a nation born in a day. It was as if the 430 years were a time in gestation when the baby grew large. The plagues were like labor pains before birth and now the nation is born.

F. A POINT TO REMEMBER

Passover is a very important yearly feast for all the Jewish people. It should be important to all the born-again Christians, too. Not as a ritual or religious holiday, but what it signifies to us.

The original Passover is nothing more than a foreshadow of what is to come - the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Not the death of the lamb in Egypt, but the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ who became the atoning sacrifice for all of us and has provided a place of safety in heaven in that day of judgment.