

"THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS"
Exodus 12:1-28

Intro: I have taken as my subject for today the expression found in v. 2 of Exodus 12: "the beginning of months."

The Hebrew word translated "beginnings" is the word for head. Thus, "the beginning of months" would be the head of the months, meaning two things:

- 1) It was to mark the beginning of their year.
- 2) It was the most important, the most outstanding, of all of the months of the year.

The beginning of their year had been in what is to us the month of September, and this is still the time of their Rosh Hashanah (the new year). But the Passover was to come March or April (and it still does).

Historians tell us that the Jews continued to celebrate their civil and social duties according to the old plan, but that the religious duties were all marked from the month Abib. After the captivity it was called Nisan.

It is interesting to recognize that the month of the Passover was henceforth to be recognized as the most important month of the year.

We can think of other times which might have been chosen.

Surely the birth of Abraham would be a date that might qualify. He was the father of the nation as well as being the father of all who are saved. But, if that were the month he was born, we have no evidence of it. So Abraham's birthday-month was not the head month.

Or it might have been that important month when Jacob moved down into Egypt. It was at that time that the Lord announced to Jacob what He would do for Jacob's family while they were in Egypt. Listen to these words:

I am God, the God of thy father:
fear not to go down into Egypt;
for I will there make of thee a great nation (Gen. 46:3).

He promised to go down with Jacob, and then to bring him back out of the land. But that was not the time chosen.

Many would feel that the time (later than this) when God gave the Law to Moses would surely mark "the beginning of months." Think of the way God revealed Himself at that time. And the Law was to be binding upon the people of Israel from that day until our Lord accomplished His work on the Cross.

But that was not "the beginning of months."

The most eminent month, the most outstanding month, was the

month the Passover was instituted, and the month in which the children of Israel were led out of Egyptian bondage. That should have been of outstanding importance to every Jew, and it has to be one of the most important statements ever made in connection with God's dealings with the nation Israel. We can say that there was nothing that ever happened in Israel that was more important, more significant, than what happened in Egypt on the 14th day of the month of Abib.

Anybody who studies the Old Testament should not miss a statement like this. It is like it were printed all in capital letters, and underlined!

Why was it so important? There is certainly something here which surpasses any reason we might have for celebrating the beginning of a new year. Certain dates may be important to us individually, or as families, or even as a nation, but how can we say that one month is more important to us than any other month?

Let me mention four reasons why this was important, and why the truth that we have here continues to be important to us as Christians even today.

I. IT WAS IMPORTANT BECAUSE GOD SAID THAT IT WAS.

That is so obvious that some might think that we should not even mention it, but we need to recognize it because otherwise we might miss it.

And this will help us in dealing with all of Scripture. The words which came to Moses and Aaron on that day were not the words of any man; THEY WERE THE VERY WORDS WHICH GOD SPOKE TO THEM!

This was not Moses' plan. Nor Aaron's. It was not something that Joseph had planned, or that Abraham had thought up. These were the very words of God!

- A. God designated the month.
- B. He selected the special day when all of this was to take place.
- C. He explained in detail what they were to do from the 10th day on to the 14th day, and for a week afterwards.
- D. This was not to be observed once, and then forgotten, but it was to be observed every year from that time on. See v. 14.
- E. The significance was to be explained carefully to their children for all future generations See vv. 26, 27.

- F. These words were announcing their independence as a nation--the first that the descendants of Abraham had ever experienced.

God obviously was beginning to move after the children of Israel had been in captivity for 400 years. And this in itself was important because it marked the fulfillment of a prophecy which had been given to Abraham in Gen. 15:16.

What a lesson this is for us as we begin reading through our Bibles during this year! Every word of God is important, and we need to keep in mind the fact that this word is distinct from all others in that it is the Word of God!

But notice a second thing about the importance of this passage:

II. IT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT IS TYPICAL AND PROPHETIC OF CHRIST.

Up to this point in Scripture, this is the most complete picture of Christ and His work on the Cross that we have in the book of Genesis.

- A. They were to take a lamb.

Cf. John the Baptist's message in John 1:29.

Cf. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

And who could miss seeing Christ in Isa. 53:7,
... he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
so he openeth not his mouth.

- B. They were to take a lamb without blemish (Ex. 12:5a). This pictures the moral perfection of Christ. He was without sin.
- C. The lamb was to be "of the first year" (Ex. 12:5). That is when a lamb reaches its full strength. For our Lord, He was in the prime of life.
- D. The lamb was to be observed for four days (Ex. 12:6). This means at least two things:
 1. They were to make sure that it was perfect.
 2. The lamb was to have their undivided attention during that time.It is easy to see how this would apply to Christ.
- E. Finally, the lamb was to be killed, and the blood applied to the doorposts of their homes.

All of this was done in order that the firstborn son in each family might be spared from physical death. The blood was applied in faith that this was sufficient for his deliverance.

It is important to note that the perfect, living lamb was not sufficient. The lamb had to die, and its blood had to be applied to the door of the home.

But there is a third reason why this "beginning of months" was important:

III. IT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT PICTURES THE TRUTH OF OUR SALVATION.

All of us spiritually are like the firstborn son--under the judgment of God, dependent upon the mercy of God, given only one way of escape.

Christ is the Deliverer, and the deliverance is through the shedding of His blood, and its application to our hearts.

Finally,

IV. IT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT TURNS OUR ATTENTION TO GOD.

A. It demonstrates the power of God, His ability to do what He promised that He would do.

B. We see here, His grace.

This was not anything that the Israelites deserved.

We see also in v. 5b that there was some leniency as to the animal that would be sacrificed. It could be a goat if it could not be a lamb.

C. We see that it was "the blood" that was important to God (cf. v. 13). The Israelites may not have been able to understand all that they wanted to know about the sacrifice, but that was not important. It was important that the blood be on the door posts and over the doors of their homes. That is what God wanted to see.

D. Then notice that we have here also the continuing protection of God.

He did not pass over and then leave them. But He remained where He saw the blood--to preserve them! See v. 23.

Concl: There may be days that are important to us. Usually it

is a date like our birthday, or the birthday of a loved one (a wife, our children, our parents, a close friend). BUT TO GOD "THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS," THE OUTSTANDING TIME IN EACH OF OUR LIVES, IS THE TIME WHEN WE WERE REDEEMED FROM SIN AND ITS BONDAGE, AND THIS IS WHAT WE ARE TO REMEMBER YEAR AFTER YEAR.

It may be that we do not remember the exact day or even the exact month, but we remember with great joy that the Lord has saved us, and we are now, and always will be, His children.

What a surprise it must have been that after the Lord and His disciples had observed the Passover, the Lord instituted another meal of remembrance which we are to observe this morning: the Lord's Supper.

The Passover looked back at the deliverance of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, typical of the greater deliverance of all the people of God from their sins. When the One came who was the fulfillment of the type, our Lord Jesus Christ, then we are not to be concerned with the type, but with the One Who is the fulfillment.

As we remember the Lord today, let us thank God for the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, "the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."