

THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS

Ex. 12:1-13

Intro: This morning I want to think with you about some of the main things that will be important for us in 1974, things which the children of Israel had to be concerned about with the beginning of each new year.

Note: vv. 1, 2, 14, 17. This was not something which was just done once and forgotten. Their deliverance was once-for-all, to be sure, but they were to remember it every year by doing just exactly what they did on that memorable night when they were delivered from Egypt.

Not only was this an important time, but the memory of it evidently was also important for the spiritual blessing of the people from year to year. The observance of the Passover and of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were not optional for the people of Israel; they were commanded to observe these Feasts each year. Why?

The answer to this question will help us to get to the meaning that this passage has for us as we begin a new year.

Let me call your attention to seven things which all of us need as we begin 1974.

I. IT WAS A TIME TO TURN TO THE WORD OF GOD (Ex. 12:1, 2).

Note: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron . . ."

If they wanted to go to the original source of information regarding what the Lord wanted them to do at the beginning of each year, they had to go to the Word of God.

It is amazing how many of the people of God will go to books written about the Bible instead of going to the Bible itself! One thing that the Passover did each year (or at least was designed to do) was to get the people into the Word of God.

Moses wrote one entire book to stress the importance of the Word of God: the book of Deuteronomy. Do you remember this passage from Deut. 6:4-10a, 12; 8:11,

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine hearts; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt

beind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob . . . Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

And how do we forget the Lord?

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his ordinances, and his statutes, which I command thee this day" (Deut (8:11).

As you begin 1974, what provision are you making so that you will be turning to the Word of God day by day throughout the year--to read it, to understand it, and to obey it?

This is the starting point. Everything else which I am going to mention this morning will be impossible if you do not start with the Word of God! Read it. Learn it. Obey it.

And we are so constituted that we do things better if we have a plan. That is why you were given a Bible reading calendar this morning. If you have another plan, use it. The main thing is to get into the Word of God for yourself.

II. IT WAS A TIME TO PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE LAMB (Ex. 12: 3-6a).

The Passover Lamb is an Old Testament picture of Christ. Cf. Paul in 1 Cor. 5:7b,

"For even Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us."

And do you remember Peter's words in 1 Pet. 1:18, 19?

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

At the beginning of every year the Israelites were to focus their attention on the lamb.

There are many details about the Passover Lamb that were important, but one was especially important: it had to be "without blemish."

What did this mean?

It means that it had to be a perfect lamb!

At the beginning of every year every child of God needs to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect Lamb of God.

We had this not long ago in Hebrews. Do you remember? He is and always has been, and always will be, "without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

And add to this what Paul, and Peter, and John said:

- 1) Paul: He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:17).
- 2) Peter: He "did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22).
- 3) John: He had "no sin" in Him (1 John 3:5).

And the Apostle John also says concerning us,  
 "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1, 2).

What better way to start the new year than to give some serious, prolonged thought to the sinless, righteous character of our Lord Jesus Christ!

### III. IT WAS THE TIME TO SACRIFICE THE PASSOVER LAMB (Ex. 12:6b).

They were only redeemed once, but they remembered that redemption every year.

We, too, need to think often about the terrible price of our redemption.

- 1) Rom. 5:6 - "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."
- 2) Rom. 5:8 - "But God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
- 3) "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10).

Has that truth really gripped your heart? Why not take your Bible this year and, as you read it, pay particular attention to those passages which speak of our Lord's death.

### IV. IT WAS THE TIME TO APPLY THE BLOOD (Ex. 12:7).

This was closely related to what we have just been considering, but it was, nevertheless, an essential part. Without the application of the blood there could have been no deliverance. Cf. vv. 12, 13.

The blood was proof of the death, but it was applied to their homes by faith.

Why did they apply the blood? Because God said for them to do it. This is faith--taking God at His word, and acting upon it. It is depending upon Him to do what He has promised that He will do.

Here is our assurance: faith in the blood. Perhaps some need to get this straight for the first time, but we all need to notice the place that this is given concerning our salvation, and all through the Word of God!

Listen to Paul's words in Rom. 3:24-26,

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of the sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

- V. IT WAS THE TIME TO ROAST THE PASSOVER LAMB (Ex. 12:8). Note the phrase, "roast with fire."

This brings out another aspect in the death of Christ. It is the Son coming under the judgment of God.

Isaiah deals with this truth concerning the death of Christ. Think of the last part of the familiar Isa. 53:6,

" . . . and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Or farther down in v. 10,

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

Or even earlier in the chapter,

" . . . yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (v. 4b).

Our Lord was experiencing the awfulness of this when He cried from the Cross,

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).

Make sure you understand this, and begin this new year by giving some fresh thought to this, asking the Holy Spirit to enable you to understand it better.

- VI. IT WAS THE TIME TO EAT THE LAMB (Ex. 12:8-11). This, like the application of the blood, speaks of our part in the sacrifice of our Lord. To apply the blood speaks of our faith in Him; to eat the Lamb speaks of our fellowship with Him. He not only gives us life, but He is our life.

Cf. John 6:53-57 for the truth.

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, yet have no life in you. He who eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Do you understand this relationship to Christ that you have? Paul said, "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 3:20) and spoke of "Christ who is our life" (Col. 3:4).

The Lord Jesus said,

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4).

#### VII. IT WAS THE TIME TO EAT UNLEAVENED BREAD (Ex. 12:18-20).

We did not go this far in our Scripture reading, but we cannot speak of the Passover without speaking for just a moment about the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Leaven is always a picture of sin in the Scriptures:

- 1) 1 Cor. 5:8 - "Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."
- 2) Matt. 16:6, 12 - "Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. . . Then understood they that he bade them not to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."
- 3) Gal. 5:9 - "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

The truth which is pictured here is probably the most needed truth today among those of us who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are defiled by leaven, by sin.

This Feast lasted for 7 days! And why? Obviously because the Lord wanted to impress this upon the hearts of His people at the beginning of the year so that they would never forget it.

Concl: In just one more day we will be into a new year: 1974! Do you want to prepare for it so that it can be the kind of a year that the Lord wants it to be, and the kind of a year that will satisfy you? Then take each one of these words and

let them be your words for 1974, and for every other year that the Lord gives us:

- 1) The Word of God, the Scriptures.
- 2) The Lamb of God, our Lord.
- 3) The Cross, the sacrifice of our Lord.
- 4) The blood--the only foundation for our faith.
- 5) The judgment of the Lamb--roast with fire.
- 6) Eating the Lamb--our union with our Lord.
- 7) Unleavened bread--for a life separated from all that is evil in the sight of God.

This keynote for the year, and maintained by the grace of God throughout the year, is the way of blessing for the people of God.

But someone here might say this morning, "I am not a Christian. I am not a child of God. The Lamb of God has not taken away my sins!"

He will this morning if you will let Him. The Gospel is beautifully pictured in this very passage because the thing which we have been talking about are the very truths which we need to understand if we are ever to be saved from our sins. Exodus 12 gives us the first and greatest complete picture of salvation that we have in the Word of God