

THE PASSOVER

Moses - Part 7

Exodus 12

Intro: Before we get into Exodus 12 today, I would like for you to turn back with me to Exodus 4.

We read in verse 18 of that chapter that Moses had gone to his father-in-law, Jethro, after the Lord had appeared to him in the burning bush, to get Jethro's permission for him to return to Egypt. Jethro unhesitatingly agreed, saying to Moses, "Go in peace." This, of course, as we saw, gave Moses added assurance that this was the Lord's will for him.

Then you will see in verse 19 that the Lord appeared to Moses again, also confirming his call, telling him again to return to Egypt. Verse 20 of Exodus 4 says that Moses obeyed. But verse 21 gives us a very important message that the Lord gave to Moses before he left Midian. I want to read the next three verses to you which tell us what the Lord said to him:

21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn (Ex. 4:21-23).

As the contest went on between Moses and Pharaoh, I wonder how much Moses remembered of what the Lord had said to him as it is recorded in these verses. I think that it not possible to be dogmatic about this. But we can see that God told Moses that He was going to harden Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let Israel go, but also that if Pharaoh did not let Israel go, the Lord was going to kill his, *i.e.*, Pharaoh's, firstborn son. But we also see in these verses in Exodus 4 that the Lord told Moses that he, Moses, would "do all those wonders before Pharaoh." God had predetermined exactly what He would do to Pharaoh, the order in which He would do them, and that He would do all of them, but that Pharaoh would not let Israel go. The Lord knew that Pharaoh would not let the sons of Israel leave Egypt! It was not only important for Moses to remember these things, but it is important for us to remember them also because

they help us to get a better understanding of God and His will.

It is interesting in reading the commentaries to see how some men have explained the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Some feel that it would not have been right for the Lord to harden Pharaoh's heart before Pharaoh hardened his own heart. But, in addition to the statement in Exodus 4:21 that God said that He would harden Pharaoh's heart, before we are told that Pharaoh hardened his heart, we are told in Exodus 7:13 that the Lord "hardened Pharaoh's heart" so that he would not listen to Moses to let the children of Israel go. *So it seems that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart started with God.* But in the very next verse, Exodus 7:14, we read,

14 And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go.

And so all through the chapters that we have just covered we read that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and we read that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Moses in writing this record alternated his comments about hardening basically between two Hebrew words. One meant that his heart was strengthened to resist God; the other that he was stupid in what he did. It seems to imply that he threw reason out of the window and acted like a man who had no sense.

The Apostle Paul has given us in the book of Romans a lot of help on this question of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. And I think it would be wise for us to read what he said to help us in dealing with this problem. So please turn in your Bibles to Romans, chapter 9. I wish we had the time to read the whole chapter, but we don't. Perhaps you will do that this afternoon. But here in Romans 9 let me point out that Paul was dealing with a subject that has been greatly neglected by Christian people in recent years. It is the subject of the sovereignty of God. The church has become so man-centered that you would think that we are running things and that God is only in a position of standing by to see what we are going to do next. God is standing by, all right, but not to see which direction we are going; *He is in complete control. He is doing what Paul said He always does: He is working "all things after the counsel of His own will"* (Eph. 1:11). That applies to "all things," not just some. And that truth is supported by Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. But let us see how Paul explained it. I will begin reading with verse 10, but I want you to notice that in the verses just before verse 10 Paul was explaining that when God called Abraham and gave him the promise of salvation, He was not saying that all of the biological descendants of Abraham were to be included in this salvation. The promise was handed down through Isaac.

Then Paul said this (begin at this point reading verse 10 and go down through verse 24). Verses 17 and 18 apply to our present study (referring still to Romans 9). Verse 17 is a quotation of Exodus 9:16 which we had in the message last Sunday.

The Lord Jesus was teaching His own sovereignty in one of the parables He taught while He was here on earth, the parable of the laborers which a man hired to work in his vineyard. He promised to pay them a denarius, which was regular pay for a day's work. They started to work at 6 a.m. At nine o'clock he found others who weren't doing anything, and he sent them into his vineyard, promising to pay them whatever was right. He did the same with another group at noon, another group at 3, and another group at 5. When they lined up to receive their pay, he gave them all a denarius. Those who had been working the whole day came to the owner of the vineyard complaining because they did not receive more than what those received who had only been working an hour. But the fact was that he had agreed to pay those who went to work at 6 a.m. a denarius, and that is what he paid them. Did they have the right to complain? What he gave the others was really none of their business. And so he asked them, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" (Matt. 20:15a).

What was Paul's answer to those who objected to the doctrine of election? See his answer in Romans 9:20-24. I know of many people who object to the doctrine of election, but I don't know that I have ever heard of anyone who was mad at God because they weren't saved and wanted to be. I tell you that instead of talking about the rights of the rich as compared with the poor, or the rights of the blacks as compared with the whites, or the rights of homosexuals as compared with those who are straight, or the rights of women as compared with men, or any other contrasts in our society, *we had better start thinking about the rights of God because when we stand before Him (and we will all be there some day) that is all that is going to matter. Learn from Pharaoh that if you despise the Word of God and reject the Gospel of God, you are playing a losing game for which you will suffer for all eternity.* Pharaoh was responsible for his own obedience or disobedience to the Lord, and we can say that the judgment he experienced, he brought on himself.

But we have reached the point in Moses' history where the nine plagues have been brought upon Egypt. In connection with each plague Pharaoh has rebelled against God. He told Moses to get out, and warned him that if he showed his face again, he would die. Moses said, "Thou hast spoken

well, I will see thy face again no more” (Ex. 10:29).

Then the Lord told Moses that He was going to bring one more plague upon Egypt, and then Pharaoh would get rid of all of them. The people were to ask the Egyptians for jewels of silver and gold. The people responded overwhelmingly. Exodus 12:35 and 36 tells how generous the Egyptians were with the Israelites. But first there must be preparation for the final plague. This truly one of the most amazing stories, true stories, in all of the Bible.

We have in this chapter one of the greatest types of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we have in the NT confirmation that God intended this chapter to portray the Lord Jesus Christ because in 1 Corinthians 5:7 that “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”

The first thing that we are told in Exodus 12 had to do with:

I. THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS EVENT (Ex. 12: 1-2).

We can say on the basis of verse 2 that this event marked the beginning of the nation. Up to this point they had largely been a family, the descendants of Abraham. But from this point on they would become a nation, and be recognized as a nation by the rest of the world. So it was a tremendously important time in the history of the Lord’s people. The details were yet to be announced as we can see in the remainder of Exodus, followed by Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. *But this was the beginning! This was “the beginning of months for them.*

Now since this pictures salvation, it would teach us that when we receive the deliverance that Christ has obtained for us, that, too, marks the beginning of a new life – born in sin the first time, born unto eternal life the second time.

II. THE PASSOVER LAMB (Ex. 12:3-12).

Up to this point in the Bible we have learned much about animal sacrifices, but, as most of you know, we are going to learn much more in the pages ahead of this in our Bibles. The Lord Jesus was called by John the Baptist, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The Apostle Peter spoke of our Lord as “a lamb without blemish

and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:19). Even Isaiah spoke of our Lord, the Messiah, Christ, as One Who would be “brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb” (Isa. 53:7). This is what the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when Philip had the joy of leading him to Christ. Every household was to choose a lamb (except in cases where there were two small families could celebrate the Passover together). Probably in Israel’s history, at no time has there been so much attention paid to the chosen lamb. The life of the firstborn son in every family depended upon the choice of a lamb, and that every detail given by the Lord was followed out exactly according to what the Lord told Moses to tell the people to do. There was no possibility for anything to be omitted, or for any substitutions to be made. Link this with the presentation of the Gospel today.

A. The lamb’s qualifications

In addition to being a lamb, which among all animals best typified the meekness and gentleness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the lamb was to be “without blemish.” This meant that it could not be disfigured in any way. It could not be missing any part of its body. It could not be blind. It could not be sick and ready to die anyway. It had to be a perfect lamb.

This typifies that our Savior had to be sinless, not One Who was sinners like we are, but one who was “without sin,” “Who did not sin,” about whom it could be said that He “did no sin,” Who “knew no sin.” It was even impossible for our Lord to sin because He was the Son of God. He truly was “a Lamb without blemish, and without spot.”

Secondly, it was to be “a male of the first year.” This meant that it had to be a ram, not a ewe, in the prime of its life. Although a defenseless creature, yet it had to be at full strength. Our Lord died, not at the end of a long life, but when He was only in His early thirties. He was “the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

Thirdly, this lamb was to be separated for all other sheep and goats, selected on the tenth day of the month and kept until the fourteenth day of the month. This surely had to be to make sure that it was truly a healthy lamb.

Have you ever wondered why we have four Gospels, and why the Lord Jesus lived for a little over three years where He was fully exposed to all

kinds of circumstances, and various kinds of temptation? We have four records of the life of our Lord, and they are united in their testimony that never did our Lord in thought, act, or word, commit sin of any kind. All bear testimony to His Deity. Even though He was a Man, yet at the same time He was God, the Son of God, the eternal Son of God. And those records are in the Bible for everyone to read. Nobody can read the Gospels with an honest and searching heart, without being convinced that our Lord was fully qualified to be our Savior, a real Man, and truly God.

But with all that could be declared about the perfection of the chosen lamb, it was not the living lamb that spared the firstborn son from death. The Lord was the greatest of all teachers, but no one can be saved by trying to live the life that He taught. The Lord was the greatest of all examples, but nobody has ever been saved by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was the death of the Passover lamb that secured the safety of the firstborn from his own death. And yet it was not just the death of the lamb. If any family had stopped merely killing the lamb, their son would have died. The blood of the lamb had to be applied on the door posts of the home in which the family lived if the son were to be spared.

In the same way no one is saved today just because he believes in the perfect life of Christ. That is important, but that alone is not enough. Neither is it enough to believe that Jesus Christ died on the Cross, if that is all a person believes. There must be personal faith in Christ, the blood applied to the heart, in order for there to be salvation. Believing everything that the Bible teaches about Christ is important, the Gospel is “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Paul expressed it this way:

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

The eating of the Passover Lamb was also a part of the way they expressed their faith. And it is true that when there is true faith, in reality we are actually partaking of Christ Himself.

Now when all of this was done – the perfect lamb chosen, observed for four days to make sure of its perfection, killed, and the blood applied, then the people were dependent upon the promise of God. And so let us

look finally at:

III. THE PROMISE OF GOD (Ex. 12:11-13).

What was the Lord looking for on that Passover night? He was looking for the blood to have been applied on the doorposts of the home. And He would have known if all of the conditions for the lamb had been met.

And so His promise was, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you. And I would call to your attention that there were no many ways for the firstborn to be spared from death; *there was just one way!* In the same way, there are not many ways of salvation today. There are not even two. There is just one. As Paul wrote to Timothy.

5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

Peter echoed this same truth when he proclaimed before the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem in the early days of the church,

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

But before I leave this word *Passover*, or as it is in its verb form, *pass over* – two words, it is important for us to know what it means. It, of course, meant that the Lord was going to pass over every home in Egypt on that night, but it does not mean that He would come to one house, see the blood, and then pass over to the next, and so on through the land of Egypt, but it meant that the Lord would pass over a home, see the blood, and then remain over that home to make sure that the destroyer would not enter that home to smite the firstborn with death. This teaches us that the Lord saves, and then He keeps.

Concl: If the Lord has opened the eyes of your heart, the eyes of your understand, so that you see the significance of that first Passover, you will also have to agree that it is a marvelous picture of our salvation. When the Lord took those two disciples whom He met as they were returning home to Emmaus from Jerusalem after His resurrection, our Lord must have taken them to Exodus 12 as “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). And then verse 44 of that same chapter we are told that the Lord did the same thing later as He met with His apostles. I trust that by the Holy Spirit He has done the same thing

for us today, and that we are going away with hearts burning within us as we have seen how beautifully our OT speaks of Christ. And this is not the only place where we see the Lord Jesus in the OT. May it be that the Lord has impressed any who are here today that there is just one Savior, and that while it is important to know Who He is, and what He did while He was here on earth, His works are important to show us Who He is, but that we are saved by His death, believing not that He died for His own sins (because He had none), but like the Passover lamb was killed so that the firstborn son would not have to die, so Christ died for our sins that we might have forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. If you know Him, praise Him for what He has done for you. If you have never trusted Him, seek Him today while He may be found, and call upon Him to save you and to keep you.