

## “THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS”

Exodus 12:1-14

**Intro:** In thinking about a text that would be suitable for a new year's message, my thoughts were directed, and I trust that it was by the Holy Spirit, to Exodus 12. In verse 1 we see that it was the Lord Who was speaking, that He was speaking to Moses and to Aaron, and that it was while the Israelites were still in the land of Egypt. And this is what the Lord said,

This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: It shall be the first month of the year to you (Ex. 12:2).

They would have known that what the Lord was about to tell them was the most important message that had received from the Lord up to that point.

In the last chapter of Exodus we read that the Lord was speaking to Moses again, and this is what He said then:

On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation (Ex. 40:2).

And then as we go on down to the seventeenth verse of Exodus 40, this is what we are told:

And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up (Ex. 40:-17).

So this date, separated by exactly one year, marked two of the most important events which ever took place with the children of Israel – the revelation concerning the Passover Lamb, and the setting up of the Tabernacle, the place where the Lord was to dwell among His people. This was the month Abib. After the captivity it was called Nisan. It corresponds very closely with our month of April. (Info. from Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. II on The Pentateuch, p. 10). Exodus 13:4 gives us the name Abib. It is repeated in Exodus 13:15 where we read these words:

15 Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty;) (Ex. 23:15).

Jamieson in the JFB series said that “the beginning” means not only *the first month* of the year, but it also meant *the first in importance*. We are approaching the year 2000, and this is important because it marks the beginning of a new century, although there are those who say that the year

2000 is actually the end of the twentieth century, not the beginning of the twenty-first century.

When we think back over the events of the book of Genesis we might come up with other events which might have marked the beginning of the new year for the people of God. Surely the period immediately after the Flood would have been one candidate. The call of Abraham, and the promise given to him of salvation would also be a date that should have been considered. But this date was not set by the people; it was set by the Lord. And forever afterwards when the people celebrated the Passover, which was followed immediately by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it was always to be done during the first month of their year.

But the emphasis was to be, not just on the date, although what was done could not have been significant if it had not been done at the proper time, but it all had to do with “the lamb” which was to occupy their attention. So let us pay particular attention to what is said about “the lamb.”

### **I. FIRST, THAT IT WAS TO BE A LAMB (Ex. 12:3-4).**

A lamb certainly could never be called, *the king of the beasts*, which is the title that we give to a lion. There have been many lambs which have been eaten by lions, but there is no record anywhere of a lamb that has eaten a lion. A lamb is a very humble animal. It is defenseless because it can't run very fast. It is easy for a wolf to catch a lamb. Isaiah 53 emphasizes that even when a lamb is being sheared for its wool, it is meek and dumb before its shearer. The lamb's shepherd was its security. The shepherd was its defender, and it was the shepherd who went to search for the lamb if it got separated from the flock.

Notice that we do not have the meaning of all of this until all of the instructions were completed. But the Jews were well acquainted with lambs for sacrifices, and so that much would have been expected by them.

### **II. SECOND, THERE WERE SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS (Ex. 12:4-6a).**

Notice what the qualifications were.

#### **A. Chosen on the tenth day of the month (v. 3)**

**B. “Without blemish” (v. 5).**

**C. “A male of the first year (v. 5).**

**D. Separated “from the sheep, or from the goats” (v. 5)**

**E. Kept until the fourteenth day of the month (v. 6a).**

### **III. THIRD, THE LAMB WAS TO BE KILLED (Ex. 12:6b).**

So, it was not the living lamb which would provide safety for the people of Israel, but a lamb that had been killed.

### **IV. FOURTH, TWO THINGS WERE TO BE DONE WITH THE SLAIN LAMB (Ex. 12:7-10).**

**A. The lamb’s blood was to be applied to the side posts and upper door post of their homes (v. 7).**

**B. The lamb was to be eaten (vv. 8-10).**

But notice the prohibitions – not raw, nor boiled in water, but roast in the fire.

### **V. FIFTH, THEY WERE TO BE PREPARED TO LEAVE EGYPT IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS (Ex. 12:11).**

### **VI. SIXTH, WHAT THE LORD WOULD DO, AND WHAT HE WOULD LOOK FOR (Ex. 12:12-13).**

This is where we get the word, Passover. The Lord was going to pass through the land. He would execute judgment against people and animals, and against all of the gods of the Egyptians. But when He saw the blood of the lamb, He would pass over that home and the plague would not take the life of the firstborn son. And to “pass over” did not mean *to pass over and leave*, but it meant *to pass over and to preserve*. The Lord Himself would become the security for the first born. And this is exactly what happened. The faithful Israelites were preserved, but there was not a home among the Egyptians where there was not sorrow over the death of the firstborn.

But we have one more point:

**VII. THIS FEAST WAS TO BE OBSERVED EVERY YEAR AS A MEMORIAL (Ex. 12:14).**

They were never to forget what the Lord had done for them. And the event was forever marked by the beginning of a new year.

**Concl:** If there is any doubt in our minds as to the greatest significance of what was done on that Passover night, it will be cleared up when we come to 1 Corinthians, chapter 5, where we read in verses 7 and 8:

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

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 (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

And also we need to remember that when our Lord had gathered with His disciples to observe the Passover with them, it was on that occasion that He instituted what is now called *the Lord's Supper*. And so this means that we no longer observe the Passover, but since Christ, "the Lamb of God," has come, has died to guarantee our salvation, now we observe the Lord's Supper in remembrance of what He did for us on the Cross.

But now let us go back to see how all that was said of the Passover Lamb was fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Go back to page 2 of these notes, and show that in each point we have details that point ahead to Christ. This is why the Apostle Paul could say that the Passover Lamb was a type of Christ.)

Now what does this all mean to us today?

It means that just as Exodus 12 really marked the beginning of the history of Israel as a nation, the moment from which their national life began, so with us life truly begins when the Lord Jesus Christ saves us from our sins.

All of us who are saved have two birthdays: the first was when we were born into this world; the second was when we were born again by the Holy Spirit and by the Word of God. But don't be disturbed if you don't know

Exodus 12:1-14 (5)

the date when you were saved from your sins. Remember that you have to take the word of others about your first birth. The important thing is that you can produce evidence, very convincing evidence, that there was a time in the past when you were born into this world. And the same is true of your second birth, your new birth. The life you live is evidence of the change that the Lord has made in your life.

So as we come to the beginning of another year, let it be a time of thanksgiving that God in His mercy has saved us, and that He keeps us, and that we are one year closer to the time when we are going to see our Lord, and be like Him, and be with Him forever.