

“Passover: Remembering our Salvation”

Exodus 12:1-13; Leviticus 23:4-5

Do you know those picture puzzles that, depending on the angle, you can see two different pictures? [a picture was shown in the service]. Can you see both pictures? No? Why not? How can you **not** see it? It's right there! Often we don't initially see both pictures yet once we can see it we wonder how could we not see it.

The apostle Paul wrote in Col. 2:16-17 that the Passover and all the feasts 'were a shadow of things to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.' The feasts were meant to point to something beyond the historical event which they were intended to remember. The Passover, we can see, foreshadowed the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Paul clearly said in 1 Cor. 5:7 that Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed.

If we attended a traditional Jewish Passover, a meal full of symbolism and meaning regarding God rescuing Israel from the Egyptians, we as believers would see things that many Jews cannot explain. For example: why are there 3 pieces of matzo [unleavened bread] and why does the father take the middle matzo, break it in two and hide half of it? If you know Jesus is the Messiah you see that the 3 matzos represent God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, was broken for our sins when He died on the cross. He was buried and rose again.

At a Passover, the account of the 10th plague on the Egyptians is read, about how God told the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb and put some of its blood on their doorposts, marking them as those homes God would spare the death of their first born child. When this part is read, the leader will wave the shank bone in the air to call the people's attention to the deliverance of the Jewish people by the blood of a lamb. Yet many do not see that Jesus is the Lamb of God who shed His blood to provide salvation for all people.

We who have the knowledge of how Jesus fulfills Passover can see these things quite readily but the unsaved cannot. It's also possible that Christians don't see the significance of the Jewish seasonal calendar that fore-shadows the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in the spring feasts and that the fall feasts foreshadow Jesus' return, including the rapture and the millennium. [show slide]. And while we live in between these two major events, the one middle feast between the two in Pentecost, which foreshadows the beginning of the church.

But everything starts with Passover. In what ways does the Passover foreshadow Jesus' death and redemption for us? When we see what the historical Passover meant, we actually see a very clear message of the gospel. The Passover, like all the Feasts was initially a celebration of an historical event where God did something great for His people. God commanded His people to celebrate the Passover in order to . . .

Remember When God Saved You **(Ex. 12:1-6a)**

The nation of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 430 years. All their life they had to obey the Pharaoh or else. All their life they were told by Pharaoh and the Egyptians that everything around them had a god to it. The Egyptians had a god for everything so you prayed to it and sacrificed to it if

you wanted rain or so the Nile would flood in the spring and cause the crops to grow or the cow god so your cows had healthy calves and produced good milk, etc. The Israelites knew about their God and prayed to Him – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – but so far their prayers had not been answered. Where was their God? Was He real?

In Ex. 2:24 however, we read God did hear the prayers of His people and remembered the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So God called Moses to redeem His people from slavery and He did it with the miraculous plagues. As we begin Ex. 12, God had already sent 9 plagues – each plague being a judgment against Egypt’s gods. Judgment on the Nile, judgment on land, judgment on the cattle, judgment on the sun, judgment with animal and insect life when He sent the plague of boils. All this was meant for Pharaoh to admit that the God of the Hebrews was the real God who controlled everything, but Pharaoh would not believe God and would not let the Israelites go.

So one more plague. This one however was a test of the Israelites’ faith. God had not asked the people to do anything, until now, but here He tells them to obey Him by observing the Passover. This is a test for Israel who needed to place their faith in God Himself. They had heard about Egypt’s gods all their life. They had also heard about God through their forefathers. Now they’ve seen the difference. ‘What are you going to decide about Me’ God was essentially saying. ‘Based on what you’ve seen so far, do you believe that I can take anyone’s life? Do you also believe that I can save your life if you obey Me?’

So God told Moses to tell the people to observe the Passover by faith, before He was going to send the last plague. So significant was observing this feast that in obeying it God . . .

Marked a new beginning in your life (12:1-2)

We don’t know what kind of calendar the Israelites had followed up til then, but from now on God says, you will mark time according to how I’ve worked in Your life. “This month will be the first month of your year”. Each month was a lunar cycle. It began on a new moon. Israel’s first month then would be the month in which you remember when God first saved you. This was the beginning of their new life with God when God saved them from Pharaoh.

If the Passover is a shadow of the reality of Christ then we should find language in the New Testament that tells us when we accepted Christ it also marks a new beginning in our life; when our life really began. **2 Cor. 5:17** says

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation; the old has gone the new has come.

Didn’t Jesus Himself use new beginning language in John 3:3 when He told a well-respected rabbi named Nicodemus that if he wanted to get into the kingdom of God he had to be “born again”? One of Jesus’ closest disciples, Peter, used the same language in 1 Pet. 1:3:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope.

God wants His people to look at their life through the ways He worked. When did God save you and me? Some of you grew up in a Christian home and you look back and can relate to Paul’s words to Timothy where he said ‘*How from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation* and that later you became *convinced of them* that you yourself needed to be born again (2 Tim. 3:14-15). Some of us came to Christ later in life. Somehow God got

a hold of us through the gospel and we asked Him to forgive us our sins and we turned to Christ. That marked a new beginning in our life.

God tells us to mark time by when He saved us. To look at our life from His saving work in our life. But isn't it different for us than it was for the Israelites? How were they saved? Same as us:

When we believed God's Word (Ex. 12:3-6)

In vv.3-6 God explains to Israel that if they want to live a new life away from Egypt, then they must obey Him and do what He says. Take a lamb or goat into your home on the 10th day of the new month. Make sure it's a one-year old and has no defects, spotless. Eat it with a large group because you must eat it all that night or burn any leftovers in the morning. God explained to them in words how they could save themselves if they obeyed by faith what He said.

Salvation comes by faith, believing God's Word about Jesus' death for our sins. Listen to Paul again in Eph. 1:13-14

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His glory.

Neither our good works or church attendance won't save us or even our parent's or spouse's faith can save us. *"to those who believed in His Name He gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent nor of a human decision or a husband's will, but born of God"* (John 1:12).

The Passover foreshadows the crucifixion. At the Passover God told the people to remember when God saved them. In the Passover God also tells us to . . .

Remember How God Saved You **(12:6b-11)**

The lamb is the key ingredient to the Passover. Technically Passover really started on the 10th day of the month, 4 days prior when you selected the spotless lamb. Again we see the prophetic foreshadowing of the crucifixion of Jesus because it was on Palm Sunday that the leaders clearly decided that they would kill Jesus. Just as a Jewish family would take the lamb into its home so they can inspect it and make sure it has no defects so Jesus spent the next few days being tested and inspected by the religious leaders but they could find no flaw in Jesus. This is how all of us are saved then:

A sacrifice was made for us (12:6)

The Passover lamb was killed before sundown on the 14th day. Passover and Unleavened Bread overlap, Passover marking the beginning of the week long observance of Unleavened Bread. Passover itself was only an evening observance marked with this meal. But the Passover was a lamb sacrificed on your behalf. The animal died so you wouldn't have to.

This is the image that the Bible gives us about Jesus. He is God's lamb who was sacrificed for us.

"God presented Him as a sacrifice for atonement, through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3:25).

When the apostle John saw the vision of God's future plan in Revelation, this is how he saw Jesus: *"Then I saw a lamb, looking as if slain, standing in the centre of the throne"* (Rev. 5:6). John heard a song being sung around the throne: *"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God."* (Rev. 5:9).

But just because Jesus died as a sacrifice to atone for our sins does not automatically mean everyone is saved. Even the Passover foreshadowed the need for each of each one . . .

To apply the blood of the Lamb for ourselves (v.7)

Each home that sacrificed a lamb was to take some of the blood and apply it to its door frames believing by faith in God's words that He would save you from death. It isn't enough to know in your mind that Jesus died for our sins, we must apply the blood to ourselves. Each one must choose whether we have believed Jesus died for our sins. Paul said in Rom. 10:9-10

*"That if **you** confess with **your** mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in **your** heart God raised Him from the dead, **you** will be saved. For it is with **your** heart that **you** believe and are justified and it is with **your** mouth that **you** confess and are saved."*

Each one of us must believe that Jesus' sacrifice for our sins will result in our forgiveness and receiving of eternal life resulting in joy and peace now and eternity in God's presence.

The Passover teaches us that we are to remember when we were saved, how we are saved and to . . .

Remember What We Were Saved From **(12:12-13)**

All their known lives these Israelites had been slaves. Not just physical slaves but in many ways slaves to the false belief system of the surrounding culture. Surely this had to have affected their minds. Always hearing about how great Egypt's gods were and the Pharaoh especially. They probably helped build these statues to their gods. They looked powerful. Did they really control the Nile, the rain, the crops, the animals, how many children you had? In v.12 God says what He will do that night. That in striking down the firstborn of all Egyptian families and animals God was *"bringing judgment on the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD."* He is the only God. He had already shown His power over everything else the people believed was a god. But now God was showing He was the only God and even was more powerful than the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh, who had thought he was their master over all, would now, by the death of his first born, be shown to be subject to God himself.

The Passover foreshadows God saving us from . . .

Sins' mastery over us (Ex. 12:12)

All their lives the Israelites had to listen to Pharaoh. Now God was telling them, 'Listen to Me.' You will no longer be under the slave master. I will free you from his power. Sadly how some would want to go back to that later on when trials come at them in the wilderness. That's not completely surprising because even God's people today are tempted to go back to their sin enslaved life when living for Jesus doesn't look like its working. Paul says that when we accepted Christ, we exchanged masters. We are no longer slaves to sin. *"Thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves to sin,*

you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and become slaves to righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18).

In freeing them from the Pharaoh, God was telling Israel to obey Him, let Him be their new gentle master and He will meet their needs and show them a new life in the promised land. It didn't mean everything will always be easy and fine – it wasn't – but it will mean that God can give you the power through his Spirit to overcome sin's desire to master our lives.

“Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11)

This is our position in Christ. God equips us to have power over sin by trusting Him and applying His words. The power of sin's mastery over us has been broken. We choose whether we want to be free from its control.

The Israelites chose God to be their master and not Pharaoh. By applying the sacrificed blood to their doorposts they believed by faith God would free them once and for all from Pharaoh and save them from . . .

Final judgment (12:13)

God put to death the first born of those who did not choose to put the blood on their doorposts. Most of the Egyptians and Pharaoh refused to believe God was the true God. Those who refuse to believe God is Lord will experience the final judgment of separation from God.

Those who applied the blood lived and were set apart to be with God. God lived with His people by His presence leading them with the cloud by day and fire by night. He said He would be there God and they would be His people. Likewise, God promises us He will never leave us nor forsake us in this life and after we die. Death for the believer is a transition from earth to God's presence. The Bible assures the believer in Rom. 8:1 and many places:

There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1)

The shadow of the Passover reveals the reality in Christ. That He is the Lamb of God whose blood was shed for us on the cross. If we accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice for our sins, God will pass over us the final judgment and grants us new life in Him now. We must believe what His Word says about salvation. He is the only God. He can save us and free us from the future penalty and present power of sin through Jesus His Son.

The Passover was a clear picture of what Jesus would do, and yet many Jewish people – let alone Gentiles – still don't see it. Have you seen it? I pray you know Christ has died for you and offered you eternal salvation and freedom from sin's power. If you have not then you can do that right now where you are seated. Confess to God you are a sinner in need of salvation. That Jesus is Lord and the one who died for your sins and place your trust in Him. And if you know that then be grieved for your friends, family members, co-workers and neighbours who are lost and unaware that they need to apply the blood of Jesus to their own sins if they want to be free from sin's mastery over their lives.

Look at your life from God's perspective as to when and how He saved you from the penalty and power of sin. Thank those people who were instrumental in helping you understand the gospel if you haven't lately. More importantly share that truth with others.

Our willingness to live obediently to God, free from the temptations sin still offers us, is the most powerful way to share the gospel. When people see the freedom we have from the things most people worry about, when they see us showing we have hope even in difficult circumstances, they will want to know how can they 'get' what we have. Pray we are always ready to share the reason for the hope that we have in Christ.

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If you have any comments or questions about this sermon please contact us at olivet@rideau.net