

Sunday 21st June 2015 AM The story of the Lamb - Exodus 12-13

Title: The story of the Lamb - Exodus 12-13

Purpose: To understand the full biblical sweep of teaching in regard to the story of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world with Passover as one key component.

INTRODUCTION

Independence Days

- **The Sudanese** - do it on **January the 1st**
- **The Chileans** - on **February the 12th**
- **The Ghanaians** - on **March the 6th**
- **The Irish** - on **April the 24th**
- **The Norwegians** - on **May the 17th**
- **The Philipinos** - on **June the 12th**
- and **the Americans** - on **July the 4th**

Q. SO WHAT are they all doing?

YES - they are CELEBRATING gaining their INDEPENDENCE:

- And typically it is **OUT OF** a situation of some **OPPRESSION & SERVITUDE**
- and **INTO** a situation of **LIBERATION & FREEDOM**

Today

Today, as we come to Exodus 12 we are coming to the events that gave the OT People of God - their INDEPENDENCE DAY.

Scroll back a moment

I want to scroll back a moment, and last time around we saw the opening 9 plagues and we are now at round 10 and this is truly the KNOCKOUT ROUND for Pharaoh and for the people of Egypt.

Q. Where did it all begin?

Well perhaps you remember the exchange at the start of Exodus Chapter 5 - I'll read those two opening verses - you may remember them, as we read them last week as well:

"Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.' "

Pharaoh said, "**Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go?** I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go."

And you may recall we pointed out that this was quite some TRIGGER QUESTION here: "Q. Who is the LORD, that I should obey him?" and we said that that was actually a very good, a very real question.

In effect Pharaoh was saying:

"Q. So just what is so very special, so very unique about YOUR GOD, about YOUR LORD, about your RELIGION?"

How would you answer

Q. I wonder how you would answer that question?

Q. What is it that is completely CENTRAL to our faith, that at many levels is VERY DEFINING of our FAITH?

Well, I think it's fair to say that:

- if you want to examine **the CENTRE GROUND for the Jews** - then you would go to **the PASSOVER MEAL**
- & if you want to examine **the CENTRE GROUND for Christians** - then you would go to **the REVISED PASSOVER MEAL** - which is what we call **THE LORD'S SUPPER**

So this morning we are very much on the BIBLICAL CENTRE GROUND.

And if you were to think:

Q. So what is at the VERY CENTRE (at the bulls-eye if you like - at the epicentre)?

Then you would realise that for BOTH - we have a LAMB - we have A HELPLESS VICTIM.

This morning

This morning - starting with **Exodus 12** and the institution of the Passover - we are going to trace out what is essentially: THE STORY OF THE LAMB and we're going to do that in three SEGMENTS:

FIRSTLY:

1. MOSES - A LAMB FOR A NATION

Straightaway, as soon as we come to **Exodus 12** we know that this event is pretty big on the scale of things because they are told to rewrite all their wall-planners according to this new timing.

Verse 2 says "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year."

You can imagine David Cameron coming on the Telly and saying that tomorrow is going to be January the 1st - and once you have checked to see that it is not April the 1st - you start to realise just how major a shift is taking place.

Q. What's this all about? A threat

As with any passage of scripture, even one that stands out - and this one stands out as a climax of all the plagues on Egypt - you still need to stand back and ask the REALLY, REALLY BASIC QUESTION: **Q. What is this passage really all about?**

And fortunately for us this very question is put into the mouths of future generations and is present along with the answer at **Chapter 12 and Verses 26&27**, let me read them:

"... when your children ask you, '**Q. What does this ceremony mean to you?**' then tell them, 'It is **the Passover sacrifice** to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and **spared our homes** when he struck down the Egyptians.'
" Then the people bowed down and worshipped. ""

We started off thinking about countries that celebrate their independence, their freedom, on particular days around the year - and by way of contrast, one country that is *not* really celebrating at this time is GREECE.

We are all waiting to see what will happen with Greece and its ever deepening debt crisis. For a long time now, other countries have been giving these financial bail-outs, essentially extending Greece's debts - **BUT THERE DOES COME A TIME** - (and everyone is wondering whether that time has come) **for those debts to be called in.**

Q. Are we about to see the death of the Greek economy as we know it
OR will it somehow be SPARED FROM ITS DEBTS?

This [Chapter 12 of Exodus](#) is the story of just how the fledgling nation of Israel were SPARED from inevitable death when the DESTROYING ANGEL knocked on their door.

Let me pick off three facets first before we proceed to do a bit more unpacking:

- **FIRSTLY** - the setting of this meal, this Passover, is one that is **REMARKABLY OMINOUS**. There is one out there called **THE DESTROYER** and he is coming through every street and is going to go past every single door in the land.

And tonight a **curfew** is being issued for everyone's safety in the **whole region of Goshen** where the Israelites have their homes.

- **SECONDLY** - the protection against this DESTROYER - is itself rather unexpected because it is going to be a cuddly, 1 year old, boy lamb.

I suppose this is about the equivalent of telling your children - tonight the most horrific DESTROYING ANGEL is going to come to our door - BUT - we have the answer - we going take our pet: "fluffy here" - and so long as we put our cat out tonight - we're going to be just fine!!

You see the Israelites were told, on the 10 day of this first month of your new calendar - find yourself a pet lamb and look after it for the most part of a week and then, once you have time to observe it and know that it is perfect in every regard - and once you have started to get a bit attached to it - **SLAUGHTER IT!!**

- **the THIRD** slightly unusual aspect - is that they must now take the fresh blood of this lamb and apply it to the whole door - BOTH the sides and the lintel where you won't see it BUT God will.

Let me now run through the story - & It has to be said that this story is really *not really* your "common-or-garden" story:

Now we are given in [Chapter 12 from Verse 3 to 11](#) a detailed explanation of how they are going to celebrate New Year:

So [Verse 3-11](#): "Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.

If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.

The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.

Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the **meat roasted** over the fire, along with **bitter herbs**, and **bread made**

without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire—head, legs and inner parts. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover."

We see:

- **The meat is to be eaten roasted** - Q. Why is that? Q. Why can they not boil it? Well I think it all comes down to wholeness. It seems to be an emphasis that this "Passover sacrifice" (as it is called in Verse 27) is to be kept whole and no-one is likely to have a pot big enough to boil an entire lamb whole.

A similar aspect of this wholeness is reflected in the way this sacrifice is to be consumed - nothing is to be left to the next morning. Again it seems to be saying that the taking of this sacrifice is *not* to be done in any "piecemeal" fashion. It is as though God were saying, I want you to truly FEAST on this sacrifice, you are not to just pick at this meal like fussy children who don't have much appetite.

- **There are bitter herbs** and these would be symbolic of the affliction and hardship that describes what they are being released from.

The reign of Egypt over them has been very HARSH and they have suffered a terrible reign of SERVITUDE.

- Then there is **the absence of yeast OR leaven**.

I think to understand this we need to see that across Scripture yeast is often connected with the idea of sin, of corruption and impurity.

So I suppose that one way of seeing this is that God is saying - "this meal represents the dawning of a new day and so it is 'out with the old and in with the new'".

The Passover meal represents something that is radical in nature.

Now there is clearly a lot more we could say, but I want to continue the STORY OF THE LAMB from another place.

So #2 now:

2. ABRAHAM - A LAMB FOR A MAN

For Abraham, that great old Patriarch, that Father of Faith, we are going to go to that episode in Genesis 22 where God tests him and tells him to take his son, his one and only son (that is son of promise via Sarah his wife) and to sacrifice him on Mount Moriah.

Easy to make assumptions

Now one easy assumption that we can make about Abraham is that when it came to various spiritual realities God had kept Abraham pretty much in the dark - simply on the basis that we don't find them written down until Exodus and Leviticus.

Tithing an example

So take for example **TITHING**. This gets formally put down in writing in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy - HOWEVER - way before this we find Abraham giving a tithe to Melchizedek in [Genesis 14](#) and Jacob vowing to give one in [Genesis 28](#).

Abraham knew that he was in debt to God more than for just a tenth and this tied into his spiritual understanding of the place of the FIRSTBORN MALE. Abraham knew that everything he was, everything he had was God's AND that he was completely indebted to God - that he had not loved God with everything, he had not served God with everything and that he had not loved those around him as himself. No doubt Abraham had a profound sense of debt, of falling short.

We find details spelled out in [Exodus 13](#) let me read the opening verses:

(Exodus 13 verses 1-2) "The LORD said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. **The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me**, whether man or animal."

And also in [Verse 13](#) they are told: "Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. **Redeem every firstborn among your sons.**"

In the Jewish culture back then AND in very many cultures around the world, people do not think nearly as individualistically as we do in the West. What matters is the family and the FIRSTBORN is the one who will receive the wealth of the family in order to carry on and to safeguard its future.

The FIRSTBORN is, if you like, representative of the whole family - he is the federal or representative head.

Now God had promised to Abraham that through his family all nations of the earth would be blessed **BUT NOW it seems like God is calling in the debt.**

We often assume that we know what would have been in Abraham's mind as he went up that mountain in obedience to offer up his one and only son.

We think thoughts like: Q. How could God ask for so much - he is my only child - this is too much, this is too hard?

Very possibly Abraham knew that God was only asking for His rightful due. Very possibly he was trying to figure out how God could be BOTH [just](#) AND at the same time [merciful](#).

Well you know the story - Isaac the son goes up the mountain with his father and he asks that awkward question about where the lamb is for the sacrifice and then he makes this amazing statement:

It is recorded for us there in [Genesis 22 Verse 7](#):

" Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but **where is the lamb for the burnt offering?**" Abraham answered, "**GOD HIMSELF WILL PROVIDE THE LAMB** for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together."

And you do wonder whether at that moment, the penny might have dropped for Abraham - that perhaps he now had a moment of revelation from God where he saw that a substitution was going to be effected with God providing the replacement Himself.

It was right here on the mountain of God that Abraham came to know God by way of new name - that of Jehovah Jireh saying on the Mountain of the LORD it will be provided.

So thus far, in this story of the Lamb, we have seen:

- MOSES and a **Lamb for a Nation**
- ABRAHAM and a **Lamb for a man** - finally now #3

3. JESUS - A LAMB FOR A WHOLE WORLD

The NT, as is usually the case, is like flicking on a light switch so that the shadowy details of the OT are suddenly made clear.

We all know there is no point have a signpost to something if the something, the destination does not exist - and the PASSOVER LAMB is exactly that - a signpost which points *not* to some woolly quadruped a year-old, male and without warts who would meet its end dead but still intact, *but* to an actual person.

Let me take you to three places where this PASSOVER LAMB is identified:

- FIRST in the book of Acts where the evangelist Philip meets the Ethiopian eunuch there in Acts chapter 8 - maybe you remember the story: Philip is told to run alongside the chariot and he hears the official reading aloud some verses from that great passage in Isaiah 53 - I'll read you the section:

Acts 8 verses 32-35 "The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: "**He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.** In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? **For his life was taken from the earth.**" The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus."

- SECOND we have the apostle Paul who, writing to the believers at the church of Corinth says in:

1 Corinthians 5 verses 7&8 "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. **For Christ, our Passover lamb,** has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

- THIRD we have John the Baptist - and you may recall that one day he see the Lord Jesus walking past and he declares to his disciples - this is:

John 1 verse 29 "The next day John saw **Jesus** coming toward him and said, "Look (or BEHOLD), **the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**"

Now we've seen three who have identified the true Lamb of God - but we should not think that Jesus himself kept it any secret:

- REMEMBER - that final Passover Meal in the upper room with his 12 disciples. All the various ingredients would have been there roasted lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread. Along with these traditional items there would have been 4 cups of wine and one who would preside over the supper and who would re-tell the story.
- REVISED - Jesus re-tells the story BUT THIS TIME THE FOCUS is:
 - *not* on the lamb ON THE TABLE
 - *but* on the Lamb AT THE TABLE

The bread is *not* the bread of their affliction
but the BODY of HIS affliction

Q. Have you, this morning, ever heard the STORY OF THE LAMB?

Q. Have you ever unveiled the true identity of the one whose blood was to be spilled onto the woodwork?

CONCLUSION

I guess if [Exodus 12](#) teaches us anything it is that there is a debt to pay and the great danger is that of defaulting on the debt.

NOW it maybe that you feel well - "God is going to make a distinction in my favour - I'm going to be in the camp that is going to be alright".

YOU say to yourself: "You see my firstborn is different, my firstborn is protected - God's not interested in my firstborn."

BUT [Exodus 13 and the opening verses](#) beg to differ - they say:

[Exodus 13 verses 1&2](#) "The Lord said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites **BELONGS TO ME**, whether man or animal."

And because of this OUTRIGHT OWNERSHIP - there has to be a REDEMPTION PRICE PAID.

It was only recently that I was reading in [Numbers chapter 3](#) and I spotted there something I had never noticed before:

- God gets Moses to count up *ALL* the first born of Israel and the number comes to **23, 273** and because God owns these he takes the entire number of males from the single tribe of Levi (which total to **23,000**) as a REDEMPTION PRICE

What this means is that God is not changing the rules for anyone Israelite or Egyptian - the FIRSTBORNS absolutely belong to him and He requires there to be a REDEMPTION paid OR for their lives to be forfeit.

What is interesting is that those who are taken and whose lives are not forfeit (like those of the Egyptians) are forever after in His Service. That is what the Levites did henceforth and forever and that is like us. When we know we are the Redeemed, our lives no longer belong to us.

[\(1 Corinthians 10v30-31\)](#) "... You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body (with your life)."

Q. Have you then been "bought with a price"?

Q. Have you partaken of the ONLY LAMB THAT CAN SAVE YOU?

Q. Is it His Blood that is painted on the Doorframe of your Heart?

If it is not you should surely know that one day God is going to call in his debt - the destroying angel visits EVERY house and He only looks for one thing: *not* the colour of your skin, *not* the skill of your hands or the eloquence of your mouth - BUT the blood of the LAMB.

ABRAHAM experience it MOSES enacted it ISAIAH saw it JOHN THE BAPTIST beheld it and WE in turn live on the basis of it - THIS IS THE STORY OF THE LAMB OF GOD - who takes away the Sin of the WORLD.

Let us pray ... AMEN