

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
February 7, 2016

Lesson Text: Exodus 12:1-14
Lesson Title: Passover

Introduction

The Passover marked the birth of the nation of Israel. It was the first of the religious festivals to be established by God for the Israelites. Passover is first mentioned in Exodus and can be traced through Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Second Chronicles. This “*night to be much observed*” (Exodus 12:42) refers to the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt when the people of Israel were in bondage. The Hebrew slaves took the blood of a slain lamb and spread it on the doorposts of their homes as a sign to God that He should “pass over” their houses when the plague of the death of the firstborn came upon Egypt (Exodus 12:27).

The Passover is also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 34:18). On the fourteenth day of Nisan (our April), the Passover was celebrated. Along with the other religious feasts and festivals for the Israelites, the Passover taught the people and their children valuable historical and spiritual lessons. It also serves as a reminder that we cannot be a people of faith without consistency of remembrance.

The Jewish Passover holds a special place in the heart of the Christian believer and gives us one of the most powerful foreshadows of the work of Christ found in the Old Testament. Certainly there are other pictures of the sacrificial work of Christ throughout the Old Testament, yet the Passover is that one single picture of the blood of the Lamb satisfying God’s demands for substitution for sin and death (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

The Passover and Instructions (Exodus 12:1-2)

Verse 1-2

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.”

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron” makes it very clear the Passover was not something Moses or the people established. God gave detailed instructions to be followed by His people at this most crucial moment in their history. This was God’s chosen feast, instituted and designed especially for His people. On this special occasion, God is not delivering all slaves everywhere in

the world; He is delivering His chosen people from the hands of Pharaoh in Egypt.

“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you,” is a significant statement. God inaugurated a new calendar for Israel. This was to remind the people their life as the people of God was forever connected to their historical deliverance from Egypt.

What God was about to do would be a “beginning of month” or as “the first month of the year” to the Israelites. The Jewish nation in the Old Testament had two calendars, a civil calendar beginning in our September or October, and a religious calendar which began in our March or April. New Year's Day for the Israelites in the civil year was Rosh Hashana, which means “beginning of the year.” Rosh Hashana, fell in the seventh month of the religious calendar and ushered in the special events in the month of Tishri: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. But Passover marked the beginning of the religious year, and at Passover, the focus is on the lamb.

The Passover was also a time of new beginning. Just as the Passover changed Israel's calendar, salvation changes the sinner's life as well. *“Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Verse 3-4

“Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.”

“Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel” may seem like simple words of instruction but there is a message in those words. Our familiarity with the Passover story can sometimes prevent us from acknowledging the reality of this story. Put yourself in Egypt. They were to hear important words pertaining to a substitute that would keep their firstborn from dying along with a soon coming deliverance. Remember, these Hebrews had never *heard* anything like this before and they had never *done* anything like this before.

Everything about the “lamb” in our lesson points us to and reminds us of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Again, keep in mind these Hebrews did not have a completed Bible as you and I to know and understand all the ramifications and types their actions and obedience were foreshadowing. According to God's instructions to Moses, “every man” was to “take...a lamb for his house” and family. Although the word translated “lamb” in this text can

mean the young of a goat, it is commonly agreed by scholars that sheep were almost always used.

First, a “lamb” was to be selected on “the tenth day of this month.” While this “lamb” was to be selected on “the tenth day of this month,” our “Lamb,” Jesus Christ, was selected before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). Our deliverance from sin was not an afterthought with God! Second, “if a particular household was too little for the lamb,” or if there was a small family which could not possibly consume the lamb, any other large family could help eat the remaining meat of the lamb. The point is no family large or small is to be excluded from partaking of the “lamb.” The slaying and eating of the Passover “lamb” is about *inclusion*, not *exclusion*.

Verse 5-6

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.”

Third, the “lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year.” This means the lamb was one-year-old and the body of the “lamb” was not to be marred in any shape, fashion, or form.” A “male of the first year” would be strong, in the prime of life. This is symbolic of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, for the sins of the world (1 Peter 1:19-20; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 9:14). Christ, who was offered as our substitute for sin was around 33-34 years of age, certainly in the prime of life. He had no sin and knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was “without blemish.” Fourth, the “lamb” was to be kept “until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation shall kill it in the evening.”

From the “tenth day of this month” until the “fourteenth day of the same month” the people watched the lamb. So it was with Christ during His earthly ministry. Pontus Pilate said, “...*I find in him no fault at all*” (John 18:38). God the Father said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (2 Peter 1:17).

The “lamb” was to be slain before or at sunset on the “fourteenth day” (Deuteronomy 16:6). Pause for a moment and think about the words “kill it.” A family representative was to “kill” the lamb. To “kill” or “slay” means to “butcher.” This is not a pretty picture! The prophet Isaiah wrote about Christ, our Lamb, “...*he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb*” (Isaiah 53:7). John the Apostle saw Him in his heavenly vision as “...*a Lamb as it had been slain*” (Revelation 5:6). In that same scene the heavenly choir declared “...*Thou art worthy...for thou was slain, and hast*

redeemed us to God by thy blood” (Revelation 5:9). This scene of death is significant to the beginning of Passover and to the believer’s salvation.

Verse 7-8

“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”

The one-year-old lamb without a blemish must have been a beautiful sight to behold from the “tenth day of the month” until the “fourteenth day of the same month.” But God’s people were not protected by a living lamb separated from the other lambs and sheep. Neither are we from eternal death and delivered from bondage to spiritual freedom by Christ’s living example. We are saved by His death and the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22).

The “blood” was to be spread on the doorframes of the house where the “lamb” was eaten. The purpose for placing the “blood” upon the door post is expanded upon in verse 13. The “flesh” of the lamb was to be “roasted over fire” and eaten hastily. The “unleavened bread” and “bitter herbs” was to accompany the meat. The “bread” was to be “unleavened” or not include any yeast because they were to leave Egypt in a hurry and did not have time to wait on the bread to rise (Exodus 12:11). The “bitter herbs” served as a reminder of the bitterness of life they had lived in Egypt, from which the Lord was now delivering them.

Verse 9-10

“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.”

The meat was to be cooked thoroughly. All the meat was to be “roasted with fire.” There was to be no “blood” left in it because “blood” is life and that is sacred to God (Genesis 9:4). “Purtenance” refers to the inner organs of the lamb. “And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning” means everything had to be eaten in one sitting. Anything left over was to be “burned with fire.”

The Passover and Preparation (Exodus 12:11-13)

Verse 11

“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.”

As the Israelites were eating the Passover meal they were to be ready for departure and travel. “Loins girded” meant their clothing must be tucked in so as not to get in the way of walking. Their old slave clothes would be removed and they would dress in new garments of salvation. “Shoes on your feet” meant they are now ready to walk with the Lord out of a life of bondage and into a glorious new life of redemption. “Staff in your hand” is a sign the Israelites are now entering a pilgrimage as they start their journey to the Promised Land. “Staff” in “hand” also signifies as they journeyed they were to lean on something outside of themselves.

The Passover was to be “eaten in hast” because the Lord could come and call for them to leave at any moment. This is “the LORD’S Passover” means the Passover lamb was for the Lord. It was His by *name* and it was His by *purpose*.

Verse 12

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.”

The actual word “Passover” is difficult to define by a specific Hebrew word. However, it is more than just “passing by the houses of the Israelites.” The word means “to spread over” or “to protect.” What is happening on this night is God passing through Egypt in judgment, but at the same time He is “spreading protection” over those who have the “blood of the lamb” applied. This is truly a scene of judgment and grace, all in one passing!

The Passover was not only a memorial of the redemptive price paid for Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, it was also a special revelation of the impotence of “all the gods of Egypt.” The “gods of Egypt” were powerless to protect the firstborn of animal and man from death. “I am the LORD” means when this night was over, Egypt and all the world would know the “LORD” Jehovah was God alone.

Verse 13

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”

“And the blood shall be to you...” are words for meditation and worship. For the Israelites the blood of the slain lamb was for them “a token” or fully sufficient for their salvation and protection. The Lord promised Moses and the people, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be

upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.” What a glorious promise! Death cries were heard all throughout Egypt on this night, but not one tear was shed in the homes where the blood had been applied.

The Passover and Reflection (Exodus 12:14)

Verse 14

“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”

“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial” means the Passover meal was to serve as a reminder for ages to come how God judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians but spared the Israelites. They must “keep it a feast to the LORD” and an “ordinance for ever” for all “generations.” If the nation of Israel is to be God’s people, they must remember His redeeming grace through the “memorial” and “ordinance” of “Passover.”

Sadly, the Jews failed to keep the Passover throughout their history. In fact, scripture records just seven times when this feast was kept (Exodus 12; Numbers 9; Joshua 5; 2 Chronicles 30; 2 Chronicles 35; Ezra 6; Luke 22:15). In that last Passover in Luke 22:15, the true Lamb of God is revealed. The Apostle Paul said, “*For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Conclusion

The Passover marked a new beginning in Israel’s history. Salvation marks a new beginning for the repentant sinner in Jesus Christ. To know Christ as Lord and Savior is to begin a brand new life. No individual truly knows what life and freedom is about until by faith they trust the shed blood of Jesus Christ for their salvation.

Two words that stand out in our lesson text are the words “kill” (verse 6) and “keep” (verse 14). Our “Lamb,” our Substitute, Sacrifice and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ was “slain” on the cross. Christians are not required to “kill” a lamb or to “keep” the Passover. However, we must remember the meaning of this important day in Hebrew history. The question is, “How do we as New Testament believers “keep” or remember the Passover?” First, by placing our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Second, by worshipping Him and serving Him. Third, by partaking of the Lord’s Supper with the local church to eat the bread and drink of the cup “...ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Amen.