

## Exodus 12:1-14

### The Spiritual Impact of Passover Today

...and when I see the blood, I will pass over you – v. 13

Many nations celebrate their own Independence Days. We are familiar with all the hype of hoopla of our own 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Many other nations have their days that would correspond to our 4<sup>th</sup> of July. It's rather interesting to go down a list of national Independence Days and note how many nations, like the United States, declared their independence from the United Kingdom. It seems that many perhaps even most independence days have been gained from England, France, or Spain.

England herself recognizes a form of an Independence Day to commemorate the time when William of Orange overthrew James II and thus guaranteed that Catholicism would never again be the established religion of Great Britain. And in Ulster the landing of William of Orange at Carrickfergus is still recognized every year on June 14.

It seems that much of the study of the history of civilization is the study of Empires gaining dominance over other nations and then those nations eventually gaining back their independence before becoming dominated again by some other nation or Empire.

The nation of Israel is no exception to this historical trend except that the nation of Israel had a very clear distinction that was never found in other nations. That distinction is in the truth that God himself declared independence for the Israelites and instructed them to mark their calendars accordingly. Indeed they were to formulate their calendars based on the time of their deliverance from Egypt.

So we read in Exod. 12:1,2 *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.* In the case of the Israelites their Independence Day, so to speak, was not to be a day marked by picnics and fireworks but a day – indeed a week that was to be observed as a religious feast.

On the tenth day of the first month a lamb was to be taken and that lamb was to undergo a period of inspection to be sure it was a lamb without blemish and without spot. And then that lamb was to be slain, and the blood of the lamb was to be applied to the vertical and horizontal door posts. The lamb was then to be eaten by the family members and the way in which they ate it was important. They were to eat it in haste. Verse 11 describes the process *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.*

And this feast was to be a perpetual observance on the part of the Israelites. Looking back over the history of Israel you can get a good indicator of the spiritual condition of the nation by how they observed this feast of the Passover. So we read of a high water mark in the days of King Josiah when we read in 2Ki. 23:22,23 *Surely there was not holden such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of*

*Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this Passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.*

There are those that hold the days of Josiah were days only of Reformation but when I read such verses as these that describe the way the Passover was observed it leads me to think that the days of Josiah were also marked by spiritual revival. And why shouldn't they be marked that way when this feast of Passover was and is marked by great spiritual truths – spiritual truths that span the entire scope of redemption in the Old Testament and the New Testament. I'm sure that most of you are aware that there's a connection between the Passover and the Lord's supper in that it was on the occasion of their Passover observance that the Lord established the Lord's supper with his disciples.

What I would like to do this morning is to look at this historical event of Passover and see it from a spiritual point of view. And in viewing it that way I'm sure you'll agree with me in saying that this Old Testament sacrament, as it were, should still have a very definite spiritual impact on the followers of Christ today. And this is what I want you to think about today:

## The Spiritual Impact of Passover Today

If you would gain the benefit or the spiritual impact of the Passover then you must come to see first of all how:

### I. The Passover Leads Us To Reverence for Christ

You are aware, I'm sure, that the Passover lamb points to Christ. John the Baptist's message was *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* (Jn. 1:29). Peter tells us in his first epistle that *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot* (1Pet. 1:18,19). And in the book of Revelation the designation that is most given to Christ is *a lamb. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing* (Rev. 5:12).

It is the Lamb that opens the seals of the scroll. And it is the awareness of the wrath of the Lamb in Rev. 6:16 which compels the Christ-rejecters to say to the mountains and rocks *Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*. I've always found that text to be ironic since we don't generally think of a Lamb as a mean animal to be feared. On the contrary a Lamb is a very tame animal and yet in that text we find sinners desiring to hide the Lamb.

So the Passover Lamb points us to Christ. It points us to the sinless life of Christ. As I said a moment ago the Passover Lamb was to be taken on the tenth day of the first month and kept until the fourteenth day of the first month. And the Lamb was to be without blemish and without spot, a male of the first year taken from the sheep or the goats.

And just as that Lamb underwent inspection so could we say that Christ, God's Lamb underwent inspection. He grew up and walked in the this world under his Father's inspection. We've been noting in our studies in Isaiah 53 how it was prophesied of Christ that he would grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground (Isa. 53:2). He, that is Christ, would grow up before him – that is his Father.

And in growing up before his Father Christ would prove himself to be without blemish and without spot. There was no sin in him. He, alone, fulfilled all righteousness. I said in a previous message – He did no sin – he knew no sin – and in him there was no sin. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. And this did qualify him to be that anti-type of the Passover Lamb. We acknowledge, of course, that our salvation is accomplished in part by his righteous life. There are those that think his righteous life only qualified him to be our sacrifice. And while we acknowledge that there's more to his righteous life than that we do not deny that his righteous life did indeed qualify him to be the Lamb slain for the salvation of his people.

So when we partake of the bread, this morning, we should behold him as that Passover lamb without spot or blemish. We rejoice in his perfect life. We thank God for those testimonies in the gospels where we find God the Father saying of his Son – *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*. This tells us that he passed the scrutiny of his Father and was indeed qualified to be that slain Lamb.

And we must see him in that capacity – as the Lamb for sinners slain. We see in this Passover feast that on the fourteenth day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month that lamb that had passed a 4 day inspection was to be slain. Look at the words of v. 6 *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*.

To atone for our sins, you see, Christ must not only be a lamb without spot or blemish but he must be a slain lamb. We see him in the book of Revelation as a *slain lamb*. *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain* (Rev. 5:12). *The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Rev. 13:8).

This is how he takes away the sin of the world. This is how our sins are purged. This is how our salvation is accomplished. Christ, slain for our sins – Christ nailed to Calvary's tree that in the shedding of his blood our sins might be washed away. And because our sins have been washed away we are shielded from judgment. This is what happened on that Passover night. The Passover Lamb was slain, the blood was applied to the doorposts. And with the application of that blood there came the promise – the promise which was fulfilled given in v. 13 *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*.

What rich gospel truths are pictured for you in the Old Testament. And the impact this should have upon you is to move you to deep and solemn reverence before Christ. How can we fail to humbly bow before the One who became that Passover Lamb for us? How can we fail to worship him with grateful hearts, seeing as we do, how he lived a perfect life

and then died a perfect death. We're grateful for his humanity. We're grateful for his sinlessness and we're grateful for his willingness to be not only a perfect Lamb, but a slain Lamb.

So the Passover impacts us today by leading us to reverence for Christ. But would you consider with me next that we are impacted by the Passover when you consider how:

## II. The Passover Calls Us to a Response of Faith

The response of faith is recorded for us in Ex 12:7 *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.*

Do you see how the response of faith was to apply the blood to the door posts of the house where the Passover lamb would be eaten? What a vivid illustration we find in this verse of faith in action. It would not due for the head of the home to hear the instructions and not act on them. We could understand the lack of action on the part of an unbeliever but to those who believed the word of the Lord as it came through Moses, it would not due for them to simply hear those instructions and then assume that all was well.

The blood had to be applied. Neither would it due for a man to hear the instructions and even believe the instructions and yet fail to act on the instructions. Such a house would not be spared. And so in this picture we're given a picture of saving faith in action. And we see that saving faith hears the word of God and saving faith believes the word of God but saving faith doesn't become saving faith until the will enters the picture. It was through an act of the will that the blood was applied to the door posts and the household was spared from judgment.

There's another way, also, to view the picture and that is from the vantage point of the strength or the weakness of the faith involved. There would have been those, no doubt, who heard the instructions from Moses and acted confidently on those instructions being quite sure that their house would be spared. On the other hand there may have been others that were frightened to their wits end. Their faith could be described as a weak and trembling faith. It may have been with trembling hands that the lamb was slain and the blood was applied to the door posts. And then there may have followed great fear and trepidation going into the night hours.

In both cases each household would be spared. It would not be, you see, the strength of faith that gained deliverance nor would it be the weakness of faith that would fail to gain deliverance. The thing that the Destroying Angel would look for would be the mark of the blood, not the strength of one's faith. *When I see the blood, I will pass over you – v. 13.* This God's word – not, *when I see the strength of your faith* or *when I observe that your faith has reached a certain level.* The strength or weakness of faith had no bearing on a household's deliverance. It was the blood of the lamb that made the difference.

This is what makes your understanding of the atonement so important. There are views of the atonement that in the final analysis have you look not so much to the blood as to

your faith in the blood. If you don't understand the atonement to be a definite atonement then that's where you will end up. And there's no assurance to be drawn by looking to the quality of your faith. The truth is that our faith is tainted with sin. Our faith can never qualify us on meritorious grounds for salvation. It is not ultimately faith that saves, you see, it is Christ that saves. Faith is simply the channel through which the blessings of salvation flow.

This is why we're called upon to look at that which symbolizes Christ's blood. The cup points us to the blood. It doesn't point us to our faith in the blood but it points us simply to the blood of Christ. And there's a sense in which our partaking of the Lord's table provides us opportunity to renew our faith or to pledge our faith in the blood of Christ anew and afresh.

Mentally I often rehearse in my mind the words of the hymn – What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Or the stanza that reads: This is all my hope and peace – Nothing but the blood of Jesus. This is all my righteousness – nothing but the blood of Jesus.

And as I then partake of the cup I am happy at times to mentally rehearse the refrain of the hymn that says: I do believe, I will believe that Jesus died for me – that on the cross He shed His blood, from sin to set me free.

How does the Passover impact us today, then? It impacts us by moving us to worship Christ with hearts that are filled with praise and thanksgiving and it moves us to do what those Israelites did in the Passover – we respond in faith by applying the blood of Christ to our souls.

There is one more point I want to touch upon before we partake of the Lord's table. For we see finally that if you would be impacted by the Passover today then you must see that:

### III. The Passover Directs Us to a Life of Godliness

If you know anything about the history of the nation of Israel then you know that the event described in Exodus 12 was monumental to their history – so much so that they were instructed to formulate their calendars based on this monumental event of being delivered from Egypt. Look at vv. 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.*

This event was so monumental in their history that there was a sense in which it marked a new beginning. Commentators refer to this event as the birth of the Israelites as a nation. Time would be calculated based on this event.

Could you not say that the same thing holds true regarding the conversion of every sinner? When you talk to any Christian, especially those who were saved a little later in their years, and ask them what was the most momentous event to ever take place in your life? They will inevitably answer that the most momentous event in their lives was when they came to Christ.

They know full well the truth of 2Cor. 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* Conversion marks a new beginning in the life of the Christian. There's a sense in which life really didn't begin until that day of conversion.

And on that day there was a lifting of the burden of guilt. There was a new found peace. There was a new sense of purpose and meaning to life. Your soul was flooded with peace and joy. It marked a new beginning to your life every bit as much as deliverance from Egypt marked a new beginning to the lives of the Israelites.

I don't think it's improper to reflect on that day as we partake of the elements of the Lord's table. It's true that our focus is to be on Christ but you're not taking away from that focus by calling to mind the day you closed in with Christ and the impact of that day. Indeed we need to call it to mind with the hope that the same vitality that marked that day would mark this present day as well.

For we know full well that with the passing of time we tend to take our blessings for granted. It's a mark of the strength of our depravity that we reach points in our walk with the Lord where the things that once thrilled our souls don't seem to impact us the same way any longer. I believe that is one of the reasons why the Lord has ordained this remembrance feast for us so that we might be called to think upon and remember who Christ is, and what he's done and how he set us free.

This remembrance of Christ is designed, then, to keep us in the path of godliness, to keep us in the pursuit of holiness and to keep us in the pursuit of service to Christ. By way of contrast it's also designed to remind us that we've left Egypt spiritually speaking. Notice from v. 11 the manner in which the Israelites were to eat the Passover: *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.*

You know the story. Once the Angel of Death passed through the land and took the life of the firstborn in every house not marked with the blood, the Egyptians not only allowed the Israelites to leave but they admonished them to leave quickly. They were to remember that fact by partaking of the Passover with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet and their staffs in their hands.

In like manner we should remember around the Lord's table that we have left the world. We have left spiritual Egypt. We have announced, as it were, that this world is no longer our home. This world is no longer our place of allegiance. This world is no longer the place of our focus and affections. This world, rather, is marked for judgment and it is passing and will pass away.

The Lord's supper, like the Passover feast, serves to convey that message to us. And oh how we need the constant reminder! We're not to love this world or the things of this world. We're to remember that we've been saved from this present evil world (to use the words of Paul in Gal. 1:4).

If you know the history of the Israelites then you know how often they longed to return to Egypt. They forgot the bondage. They forgot that they were slaves. They forgot that their children were targeted for destruction. We may look at them and marvel at what they forgot. But lest we marvel with too much astonishment let's not forget how much we resemble them by our longings for this world. Like I say – we need the reminder of the Lord's table to convey to us that we've been delivered from spiritual Egypt.

And so you see, I trust something of the impact of this ancient Passover feast on the followers of Christ today. This feast is too rich in its typical significance to miss Christ. We are to behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And we're to appropriate by faith the value and virtue of his broken body and shed blood the same way we did when we were initially saved. And then we must be mindful of what we've been saved from and what we've been saved to. We've been saved from sin and from this present evil world and we've been saved in order to live godly lives that strive to honor Christ. May these truths be stamped on our hearts today as we remember Christ in the way he's ordained.