

## A Glorious Doxology

Call to Worship: Hosea 13:9-14

Hymn #206- *Low in the Grave He Lay*

1<sup>st</sup> Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-12

Hymn #40 (supp)- *Because He Lives*

2<sup>nd</sup> Scripture: Revelation 1:4-6

Hymn #690- *Jesus Paid It All*

### Introduction:

I was getting some routine blood work done at my General Practitioner's office earlier this week and when the doctor entered the examination room to speak with me, we spoke a little bit about the "Passover" celebration, which the Jews, of course, have just finished celebrating for an entire week. The doctor, who is Jewish, had informed me of how he and his family had just finished removing all of the leaven from their home, which the Jewish people must do for the entire duration of the seven days that they celebrate the "Passover" and the "Feast of Unleavened Bread." It is truly amazing to see this even celebrated several thousands of years after it was first ordained by God during the time of the famous Israelite Exodus from Egypt, where God had delivered His chosen people from out of the Egyptian bondage with an outstretched arm.

As I thought about this glorious event this past week, I was truly amazed to see how God had providentially brought us right to our present text in Revelation, which finds much of its application rooted in the Israelite "Passover" and "Exodus." As we consider our text for this morning, I want to begin by setting the stage, the background stage, of that which was to be recalled to the mind of the reader, before extracting the full weight and impact of the doxology given in our text.

We are told in Exodus 12:37 that 600,000 men walked out of Egypt on foot at the time of the Exodus. And that is not including the women and children who were with them. That's quite a large group and that's quite a number of empty homes that were left barren in Egypt as the Jews left, to return no more. What was it like for the Pharaoh (who seemed to have survived, even though his entire army was pretty much destroyed in the Red Sea) and the Egyptian families who remained in the destroyed, plague ridden land of Egypt to look upon the empty

Jewish homes only to find dried lamb blood smeared across the doors and on the door posts? Clearly, this blood would have been a symbol of the Jewish redemption that took place in the midst of the Egyptian destruction. For God had shielded the Israelites from all harm, protecting them from every plague and the death of the first born that came upon the Egyptians, and this blood was the only remaining symbol that pointed to their redemption. And that is exactly the way in which the Lord would have had those major historical events remembered. The shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb, which the Israelites ate on the evening just prior to the Exodus, was to be seen as the mark of their release from the Egyptian bondage. It was the symbol of their redemption and this was to be remembered throughout the entirety of their history as a nation, and it is even celebrated by many in the present, although sadly, they have passed over the very substance to which these Old Covenant symbols pointed.

And during the same night that the Jews had eaten the Passover meal, they were to eat and bake unleavened bread, and they were to lie down, as it were, with their belts fastened around their waists, their sandals on their feet and their staff in hand, signifying the fact that God was about to deliver them in haste, with a great sense of immediacy and power, as the Egyptians would soon be mourning the loss of their firstborn children, which would lead the Pharaoh to forcing them out of the land quickly. Hence, “the Feast of Unleavened Bread,” which was always to remind the Israelites of this mighty and speedy delivery and redemption brought about by God late that evening.

And then, following the completion of the Exodus, when God safely and powerfully brought the Israelites through the midst of the Red Sea, while collapsing the waters upon and drowning the Egyptian army, eventually the Israelites would be led through the wilderness to Mount Sinai, where Moses was to receive the law, which was to be observed by the people. They were to be separated unto God; representatives and servants of the Most High God and Creator of all things, in a world that knew not God. And that is why in chapter 19:1-6, just prior to the giving of the Moral Law (the “Ten Commandments,” spoken first by God Himself), we are told these words, which contain a precious promise to God’s chosen people:

“In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the

mountain. And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Israel was to be a “kingdom of priests,” servants and representative lights of the living God, because He had redeemed them from their former bondage unto this great and glorious end!

With this background in place, and this illustrative stage set, brethren, now let us “fast forward” to our present text in Revelation 1:5b-6, and note God’s Word concerning the Christ and His New Covenant church:

“To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Having just relayed the blessed salutation from our Triune God to His people, John pauses for a few moments to put forth a doxology; a statement of praise, honor and glory especially dedicated to the Son of God, the last Person of the Trinity represented in the salutation. And God would have it that way intentionally, because right from the outset of this apocalyptic Epistle concerning the future, He wants to set forth His Son, Jesus Christ, as the One who is central to the overall message of this Book. This “Faithful Witness, Firstborn from the dead, and Ruler over all the kings of the earth,” is the lead role and central message of everything that pertains to the future...all to the glory of God the Father and in accordance with the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit. This is a message that is centered upon Christ and His victorious accomplishments; all that He has accomplished and will accomplish on behalf of His church.

And as we look closely at this statement of doxology, we find the message of the Exodus coming forward with far more revelatory power in the Person and work of Jesus Christ on behalf of His *true* Israel, namely, His church.

“To Him who loves us...” What a wonderful statement; what a wonderful thought...to be loved by someone else, but the question of who it is that is the subject of this loving, who it is that is the object of this loving, and the tangible manifestation of this love, elevates this statement to a place that is infinitely more significant than a grouping of nice, warm, “fuzzy feeling” words.

1) The Subject of this love; the one who has loved and continues to love, in this context, is the last Person identified in the previous salutation, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the “Faithful Witness,” who loves. He is the God-Man; eternal God, who became man with the intention of redeeming a sinful people for Himself. He is the righteous man, who was without any sin of His own; who knew of no personal character quality or virtue from within His own inward experience that was not perfectly aligned with the holiness of God. Surely, one such as Him could love, but could He love anything unholy or ungodly? Could a person love what His soul naturally hates? And furthermore, He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He rules over all things! The worlds rotate in accordance with the degrees and angles that He had set for them. He spun them like tops with His own hands. He spoke every ounce of brightness into every single star that exists in this universe. The creative design of every living creature and of every non-living object is found on the blue print of His personal portfolio; ideas of incomprehensible beauty formed with no materials. And He reigns over every detail of history such that birds fall dead to the ground and hairs are uprooted from every head *only* in accordance with His divine will. This is the all-knowing, all-powerful, ever present, Almighty God; containing a value that is immeasurable and a glory that is unsearchable, who “loves.”

2) And who is the object of this love? “To Him who loves [who ever loves] us...!”

This great and glorious, infinite and eternal, most holy Creator and ruler of all things, takes notice of *us*? No, He does not simply “take notice,” He takes special notice. No, He doesn’t simply take special notice, He *loves* us! He loves us with the most sincere; the most genuine, profound and perfect love; a love that supersedes even our greatest expressions of love, all combined in one pile (which are often tainted by selfishness). He loves us with a one-way love that depends, not one iota on our loveliness, our good deeds or works or abilities. We are naturally everything that He hates, because we are infected; the whole of our being is infected

with the markings of sin and ungodliness. You may as well love a bottle of poison or a rabid Rottweiler or a hungry shark or a deadly viper than presume for a moment that our thrice holy God should love sinners! That we could ever consider this such a small matter; that we could ever grow cold to this reality, brethren; that we could ever treat religion as nothing more than fulfilling the weekly rituals, getting them out of the way so that we could get back to the real world; that we could gather together here this morning in any casual manner, is sadly, a great testimony to the hardness of the human heart, when we consider that we are the objects of such love as the love of Christ! Just His *Person*; who He is, ought to bring us here in a timely, awe filled, joyful manner every chance we get!

3) And what is the expression of this love? What is the tangible outworking and evidence of this divine love that is set upon us sinners? “To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood...”

And here bursts forth the Exodus analogy, brethren! What was the great sign of the redeemed of Israel when they came out of the bondage of Egypt at the Exodus? It was the shed blood of that lamb, smeared across the door and the door posts; the shed blood of that lamb, which they all partook of; of which they ate, immediately before being brought out by God’s mighty outstretched arm!

And John would here have us remember that Exodus, but only as a means of representing the real Exodus, to which that ancient Exodus pointed. No, we have not been freed from any physical bondage to the Egyptians, but we have been “freed” from a far greater, and far more relevant bondage, which was pictured in the Exodus out of Egypt. We have been freed from the bondage of our sins! Our sins held us; they blinded us; they trapped us; they barred us from the presence of God and kept us glued to a shallow and empty world of nothingness; a world of chasing idols and lying dreams that do nothing more than cloud our minds from the real need; the real need of fellowship with the very Creator who formed us for His glory! Yes, we were bound, and God’s holy Law kept us there, and we were without hope. But the Lord Jesus Christ; the glorious Son of God, entered this world through the womb of a virgin. And He became one of us, and He maintained the purity that we need, even the righteousness of God, and He was crucified as the Lamb of God. His blood was shed and in the shedding of His blood, He freed us from the power and penalty of our sins forever! His blood was smeared across the door and the

door posts of our hearts, and by faith (a God-given faith), we have eaten and partaken of His flesh, and the angel of death and judgment now passes over us, and we are freed, forever freed not from Egypt, but from the bondage of our sins. God delivers us immediately, quickly with an outstretched arm. He leads us through the Red Sea by His grace, and He closes the waters down upon our sins, so that they rise no more to harm us ever, ever again. We are redeemed! We are delivered! Our eyes and hearts are opened to God. We are reconciled to God and we obtain His favor as His own adopted, blood bought children. You see the excitement in this doxology, brethren! It is meant to be shouted; it is meant to be sung and delivered over to our God in the form of praise! “To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood...”

And then, it doesn't end there, does it? John moves on to show us something profound. That precious and unique promise given to Israel, just before they had received the Law at Mount Sinai, is carried over to the New Covenant church, teaching us that the true Israel of God is not ultimately bound to ethnic origin, but to all who are of the new creation in Christ, the Firstborn [of many to come] from the dead! “To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father...”

He has made us a kingdom of priests to His God and Father! We are the apple of His eye, and we are set apart as those who represent God, in Christ, to the world. And in our union with Christ, we reign with Christ, as an eternal Kingdom (as the *only* eternal kingdom) belonging to God. Peter explains the glorious privilege and practical outworking of this in his Epistle, in 1 Peter 2:9-12:

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

What a glorious privilege, brethren! We, who were once nothing and less than nothing, have been set apart as *God's* royal priesthood; as His holy people for His own possession, so that

we could declare and proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light!

The world is a dark, dead place. It is in utter blindness, chasing nothing of any lasting value or fulfillment. And we were once right there among the rest, bound by our sin, held by the power and influence of satan, craving lusts and material nothings like a bunch of robotic lemmings circling a dung hill. But God, plucked us out of the chaos; He took us out of our darkness and breathed life into our souls; He plunged us in the blood of Christ and set us in new righteous, white garments; He exposed His reality to us and by His Spirit, we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and He has set us apart as His own special and unique people, so that we might shout aloud to the world with our voices and with our godly, Christ serving lives, that there is a God in Israel! “There is a wondrous, glorious Creator behind all of this, and knowing, loving and serving Him is what life is all about! Come to the fountain of blessing! Come to Christ and see! It is your sin that presently separates you from your God! But, there is a Lamb; a precious Lamb of God, who has died for sinners. Come to Him by faith; repent and believe; eat of His flesh and drink of His blood by faith! Partake of His Passover and be saved and know the abundant life that comes only to those who are reconnected with the God to whom we all belong! What a privilege we have, brethren! And that is why John offers this doxology up to the Lord Jesus Christ here in our text:

“To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

“To this Subject; to this Christ who loves this object (us), and has freed us from our sins by means of the shedding of His own blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him who has brought us to God in this way, *be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen!*”

Let what He has done never go unnoticed! Let all see it and fall down on their faces in awe! Let the amazement of this reality; let the magnitude of all that He has done, be proclaimed loudly, leading to a universal choir of praise that is lifted up and cast in His direction...and let Him have the dominion that He so worthily deserves; let Him rule and reign as the only all sovereign King of Kings and Lord of Lords, forever and ever! Amen! Let it be so!

You see, brethren, this doxology; this statement of praise and of attributing glory to Christ is meant to grip our souls with great force. And when we pass right over it as if it is just another fuzzy statement concerning the atonement of Christ, then we miss the whole drive that is meant to carry us through this apocalyptic letter. Scripture is not for those who are too busy with other so-called important matters. It is for those who are simply willing to take the time to ponder, to consider over and over again, all that Christ is and all that He has done for His people. That's kind of like putting the coal in the fire and leaving it there for a while. You don't put the coal in the fire and pull it right out or use it right away do you? No, you let it sit until it glows and then it is ready to be useful. Set your soul upon the Scriptures, brethren; set your soul upon Christ until you glow and then go out and bear that glow before the watching, dead world, shining brighter than the face of Moses, whose facial glory was fading, so that others will behold Christ in you, and they will perhaps find grace in the day of their visitation!

### **The Gospel**

Some of you may be here this morning because, "It is Easter, and after all, everyone goes to church on Easter." Understand this. Being religious *in any respect* never, ever impresses God. Your own amazing, rational make-up tells you that God is not simply pleased with robotic, religious service. There are many, many very religious people, who go to church their whole lives, who partake in all manner of religious traditions (baptism, communion, bar-mitzvahs, celebration of holy days...etc) who die, never having known God *in truth*. God is not after religion. He is after the heart. Unless you are truly in Christ; unless you sincerely repent of your sins and believe into this Christ, having the assurance that you are washed by His shed blood, then you will never be right with God. Resurrection Sunday ("Easter") means absolutely nothing if you are not a new creation in Christ. He was indeed raised from the dead, and that resurrection power must work in your heart such that you are brought to the place where you repent of your sins and are united to Christ by faith. His death must signify your own death; a death to this world and to your former ways of ruling your own life. And His resurrection must signify your own resurrection; a spiritual resurrection unto a new life of knowing, loving and serving God. The spiritual resurrection is what guarantees the future physical resurrection. AMEN!!!