

Saved from Bondage



The children of Israel were delivered from captivity after spending 430 years in Egypt. Their redemption through the blood of the passover lamb furnishes us with a dramatic type of our redemption in Christ.

A supreme demonstration of God's grace, faithfulness, and power, Israel's Exodus from Egypt was the single greatest event in Old Testament history. Its theological significance transcends its history. When Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration to discuss with Christ His death, Luke used the Greek word *Exodus* to designate the Saviour's atoning death. The song of the redeemed in heaven will be the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Most significant are the references in the New Testament to the Passover, the sacrifice that inaugurated the deliverance. The New Testament refers to the Passover over thirty times, and significantly, over twenty of those references occur in the narratives of the crucifixion of Jesus. If that is not enough to confirm for us the divinely intended connection between the Passover sacrifice and the death of Christ, we must listen to what Paul explicitly declares: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Passover is the message of the everlasting gospel. There are lessons in the Passover for sinners confined in sin's bondage and under the jeopardy of the sentence of death. There are lessons as well for saints whose memories need to be stirred to think of the grace that rescued them from bondage and death and that gave them the liberty of life.

A Lesson in Sovereign Grace

Passover night was a night of division. Some died, and some lived. Why? The children of Israel did not live because they were better than the Egyptians. Israel was not a nation of saints being unjustly persecuted by ungodly Pharaoh. There were undoubtedly believers in the nation, but the Israelites as a whole were guilty of the same sins and idolatry as their Egyptian masters (see Joshua 24:14; Ezekiel 23:8, 19). God did not spare and deliver the children of Israel because of their afflictions; they deserved them. Nor did God save them because of their inherent or potential worth;

they had none. The bottom line is that God loved them and delivered them simply because He loved them (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; 9:4-6). The reason God saves is always found within Himself. Salvation—whether Israel's national deliverance or our spiritual deliverance—is always and uniquely a matter of grace. The first Passover and every following celebration of it were reminders of God's sovereign grace. Why will we as believers not die the death of the wicked? It is because of grace.

A Lesson in Substitutionary Atonement

Grace, notwithstanding its sovereignty, requires atonement. Peter declares the great price of redemption: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). His allusion to the Passover lamb is transparent, and the connection suggests some key thoughts about the lamb and the Lamb.

An Obvious Substitute

The lamb was an obvious substitute. Exodus 12:12 issues the sentence: the firstborn was doomed to death. Normally, being the firstborn meant one was in a position of privilege and honor, but not that night. One way or another there was going to be death—either the death of the firstborn or the death of the lamb. The only reprieve for the firstborn was to spend the night in a house whose door posts were stained with the blood of the sacrificed lamb (12:13). If anyone could understand the grace of substitution, it would be the firstborn who lived under the blood. What an essential gospel truth this pictures! The basis for life is outside of ourselves. Life is ours only because of the death of another. The Passover declares, "Jesus died for me."

A Perfect Substitute

Exodus 12:5-6 set high standards. Any imperfection disqualified the lamb from being a fit sacrifice. This provides a beautiful picture

by Blood

Lessons from the Passover

of our wonderfully perfect sacrifice, the Lord Jesus. That the lamb was *chosen* reminds us that God chose His only begotten Son to be the one and only Saviour of sinners: Christ is the Elect of God (Isaiah 42:1). That the lamb was *without blemish* reminds us of the absolute perfection, sinlessness, and impeccability of Christ. That the lamb was *confined* between the tenth and fourteenth days to examine and confirm its perfection reminds us of the necessary life of Christ. From His birth to His death, He was under the law in view of both God and the world. His perfect obedience secured for Him the right to be our Saviour, to die for us. The Passover declares our personal sin that demands death and Christ's vicarious perfection that earned the life that is graciously imputed to us.

A Slain Substitute

The Passover is a lesson in the necessity of death and the necessity of blood to secure the redemption of sinners (12:6-7). Death is every sinner's debt to the law, the earned end of sin and the execution of divine justice (12:12). Many paid their own debt and received their own wages that fateful night in Egypt, but many others lived by virtue of the death of the substitutionary lamb. So it is that Christ had to die to pay the penalty of sin. Justice demands the penalty. One way or another justice must be served. By Christ and in Christ, it has been paid for us. Out of Christ, the sinner is on his own.

Whereas death was the debt, blood was the effective cause of deliverance (12:7). The Passover is a vivid demonstration that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness. The death of the lamb was not enough. It was not the corpse or the hide of the victim that diverted the judgment; it was the blood. The death of Christ was necessary to satisfy divine justice; the blood of Christ was necessary to appease God's wrath by quenching the fire of judgment and washing away sins. For atonement, death and blood shedding are

inseparable. There is saving power in the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God.

A Successful Substitute

The sacrifice of the lamb and the spreading of its shed blood worked (12:13, 23, 27). Death entered every home in Egypt that evening (12:30), except where the blood had been applied. The Lord gave His word that wherever He saw the blood He would leap in passing over that house. The blood was the protecting covering, the only safeguard, against the death plague. The blood was the blockade between God's people and the curse. What the Passover lamb accomplished in this vivid object lesson, the Lord Jesus accomplished in absolute reality. The gospel of Christ is not a maybe gospel. He came to save His people from their sins, and that is exactly what He did. "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26), and "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever," He "sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). We can be absolutely certain that whenever God sees the precious blood of His Son, He will be satisfied and graciously save all who are under that blood.

One final lesson is crucial. Faith in the blood is necessary. Plenty of blood was shed in Egypt on Passover evening, but only where the blood was applied was there life. Only those who took God at His word experienced the saving power of the blood. That Jesus died is historic fact. But unless we believe God's word that offers Christ as the only way of salvation, the fact of Christ's death will not save. That Jesus died is good; that Jesus died for me is my salvation. The blood of Jesus is the difference between life and death; saving faith appropriates the benefits of the blood and rests in its power. Learn from the Passover lamb to look to Christ, the Lamb of God. ■

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