

**“THE SERVANT OF THE LORD” – A Study of the Life of Moses****“The Last Plague – Part 2” (Exodus 12:21-51)**

The Passover was one of the clearest examples of salvation by grace through the atoning work of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It demonstrated the awful nature of sin and the inability of man to deal with the problem. It also revealed the solution to sin by the shed blood of a substitutionary sacrifice, which had to be personally applied to the life of each individual to escape God’s judgment. It was only those under the blood who escaped the wrath of God.

*Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. (v21-28)*

Moses carefully passed on the instructions of the Lord. The lives of many Israelites depended on these details. The NT reveals that Moses led Israel in this because of his faith in God’s revealed word, “Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (Heb.11:28). Moses did not act out of religious ceremonial duty but because he believed in the necessity of the sprinkled blood. His faith was rewarded with deliverance for his family and his people.

Children have an innate sense of curiosity. Moses instructed the parents not to simply dismiss that but use it as an opportunity to glorify God’s deliverance, “And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.” In the same way we are called to celebrate regularly the Lord’s table “this do in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24).

Hearing the message of Moses was not enough. God’s word had to be obeyed to avoid the judgment. The people worshipped the Lord and then obeyed the Lord, “And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.” The key is “and did as the LORD had commanded.” Only the Israelites who obeyed were spared. Obedience by faith in God’s word is required to be saved from sin. The Bible instructs that God, “commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

One decision of each Israelite to trust the Word of God brought generations of blessings to their extended families. By contrast Pharaoh’s disobedience brought God’s judgment. Swindoll summarised, “They made history, while Pharaoh became history.” Generations later their descendants were benefitting from and celebrating the Exodus deliverance. In the Book of

Nehemiah we read of these descendants remembering the deliverance many centuries after it occurred,

And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. (Neh. 9:9-10)

In the same manner, one decision by a person today to believe the Word of God and obey it can impact countless generations to follow. None of us truly know what God can do from an act of obedience by us. The way out of Egypt began with a small step of obedience.

*And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. (v29-30)*

God had informed Moses that Pharaoh would initially harden his heart to resist God's will and that the Lord would somehow touch the firstborn of Egypt (Exod. 4:21-23). Just as the Lord had promised so the judgment came upon the households of Egypt at midnight. This judgment was comprehensive, "there was not a house where there was not one dead." Every home not covered by the blood of the lamb experienced the pain of death. Dave Guzik explains the significance of this final plague,

This plague was directed against two significant Egyptian gods. First, *Osiris* was the Egyptian god thought to be the giver of life. Second, against the supposed deity of Pharaoh himself, because his own household was touched (the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne).

We can only but imagine the agony and heartache as hundreds of thousands of families realised that death had taken the firstborn of the family. The Bible summarises this, "there was a great cry in Egypt." For years the households of Hebrews wept because of the bitter bondage inflicted on them by the Egyptians but now God had reversed the order. The Egyptians had paid an awful price for their rebellion. Pharaoh and his people refused to submit to God's will and learned the hard way, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). This is a lesson we all will learn.

*And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men. (v31-33)*

Pharaoh warned that the next time Moses saw him that Moses would die. The only one that had suffered the judgment of death was the firstborn of the Egyptians including that of Pharaoh. A chastened Pharaoh was now so desperate to get rid of Israel that he wanted them out that night.

Previously he had declared that they would never leave Egypt but now he was begging them to make the exodus. The irony is that the oppressors are begging the oppressed to leave.

There was no attempt by Pharaoh to negotiate with the terms God ordained, “*Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone.*” Ultimately all men must bow the knee to God’s will. A broken Pharaoh even pleaded, “*and bless me also.*” The situation had unfolded just as God said it would. Jehovah had proven that He was greater than Pharaoh and all the gods of Egypt. This total conquest was a powerful display of God’s sovereignty.

*And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians. (v34-36)*

The children of Israel followed the instructions of the Lord through Moses,” *And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses.*” They had learnt that the Lord must be obeyed. This not only allowed them to escape the judgment of the plagues but also proved to also be a blessing. God gave them wealth, which would not only be back pay but would provide materials for the Tabernacle. This is another display of God’s grace to Israel and His faithfulness to His promise made four centuries before, “*And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance*” (Gen. 15:14).

*And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual. (v37-39)*

This journey must have been one of great excitement and anticipation. The slaves had become a free nation over night. After all the bitter years of bondage and poverty, the Israelites were now liberated and wealthy. The Psalmist gives us the following insight into the hearts of Israel, “*And He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness*” (Psa. 105:43). Swindoll notes,

Isn’t that great? Rather than sadness and fear, there was exhilaration that night. The sweet fragrance of freedom was in the wind. We love to sing the hymn, “O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise.” If you think that sounds good, how about, “O for two million tongues to sing!” You could hear those voices echo far away into the distant reaches of the empty desert as Moses led the way, and the joyous throng followed. Great clouds of dust billowed as Jacob’s children walked out of Egypt, walked out of their chains and away from their bondage.

The handful that entered with Jacob had grown to be a great nation. We are told there were 600,000 Israelite men besides women and children. Probably there were at least 2 to 3 million people. Along with the spoiled jewels, the former slaves had much livestock, “*and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.*” God had kept His promises in full and Israel did not have to lift a

finger. It was all the power of God. Once again the Lord is reminding us that His promises can always be trusted.

Not all who made the Exodus were Hebrews. There was a “*mixed multitude*” from Egypt who identified with the people of God. Bob Deffinbaugh gives reasons why some were likely converted,

In the first place, most of the plagues were preceded by an announcement and a warning. Each succeeding plague was further proof of God’s existence and power, and gave greater substance to the warnings which followed. All of the Egyptians came to respect Moses (11:3), and some took heed to his warnings (9:13-21). Provision was also made for non-Israelites to partake of the Passover, if they were circumcised (acknowledging their faith in the Abrahamic Covenant, cf. Exod. 12:48-49; Gen. 17:9-14). Since there were many non-Israelites who left Egypt with Israel (Exod. 12:38), it is likely that a number were converted and physically spared from death through the process of the plagues and the provision of the Passover.

However, not all from this group proved to be a blessing to the people of God. In Numbers 11:4 some of the mixed multitude initiated a spirit of discontentment among the Israelites for the desires of Egypt. Some of the mixed multitude left Egypt physically but the spirit of Egypt never left them!

*Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. (v40-41)*

The timing that the Lord provided was not one day more or one day less for the sojourn and then the Exodus, “*And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass.*” God proved once again that He alone rules this world as the sovereign king. His promises and timings are always perfect. Likewise He still rules the world today. His timings in our lives are equally perfect.

*It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations. And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you. Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies. (v42-51)*

The Lord made clear that only the Passover should exclude those outside the covenant community. However, a way was made open to any Gentile to partake by receiving the covenant

sign of circumcision. It was therefore not a racial distinction per se but a religious distinction. Hence the Passover ordinance became a way of distinguishing between believers and unbelievers. In the same manner today, most churches only permit those who have received the NT covenant sign of baptism to partake of the Lord's Supper. When Jesus returns, a wonderful exodus will occur of the people of God.

As the Israelites made their way out of Egypt their hearts must have been full of thankfulness to the Lord for what He had done. They understood clearly the depravity of sinful man's heart. They also had a greater insight from the Passover evening that it took a bloody substitutionary sacrifice to pay the debt for their sins. The love of God for them must have astounded them. All of them deserved to die in their sins like the Egyptians but in love and mercy, God had graciously provided a way for His people to be delivered. It is not coincidental accident that the Lord Jesus died at Passover. He was the ultimate Passover Lamb who died for us.

*Have you read the story of the cross  
Where Jesus bled and died;  
When your debt was paid by the precious blood  
That flowed from His wounded side?*

*He died an atoning death for thee,  
He died an atoning death;  
O wondrous love! it was for thee  
He died an atoning death!*

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What did the Israelites learn from the Passover?

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2. Who did Jehovah prove His sovereignty to in the ten plagues?

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3. What promises did God give that was fulfilled in this incident?

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4. What have you learned from this chapter?

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