

DELIVERED FROM EGYPT

Exodus 12:21-32

If we were to interview a thousand people and ask them to write down just one thing (other than a health issue) they would like to get rid of or be free of in their lives and only they would be able to see the answer, how many do you think could come up with at least one thing? I would guess that practically everyone could think of something. If you were then to ask a question such as, “Do you know how to get rid of that one thing?” “Do you know how to stop it?” We’d get of a lot of “yes, but” answers. I would suspect that the reason that people don’t act to rid themselves of such things is that it would maybe cost too much and/or they would have to make a significant change in their lives to make it happen.

The things that hinder us from being where we might ideally be is our reluctance to make “sacrifices” and our reluctance to make “major changes.”

The children of Israel definitely had one thing they wanted to be free of or get rid of in their lives and that was being “enslaved by the Egyptians.” They had been enslaved for about 125 years and they had come to the point that something had to change. They had groaned and complained and, in addition, the time was right for them to leave Egypt and go the land that God had promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which were significant agenda items of what God was working out for all humanity. God had prepared a leader (Moses) to show them the way to go so they (and eventually the world) could experience the complete fulfillment of God’s promise made to Abram 430 years before this time when Abram was living in Ur of Chaldees (See Gen 12:3).

What were the two requirements for significant changes to take place that was mentioned earlier? The first was sacrifice that needed to be made and the second was to actually carry out the change. The transformation (outcome) and the sacrifice (the process) are difficult (maybe impossible) to separate.

These descendants of Jacob thought of themselves as slaves and that they were powerless to change their situation. They were right. However, through a series of miraculous events (the first nine plagues which discredited the false gods of Egypt) they came to realize that God (the I AM) was powerful and was taking action on their behalf. The series of disasters (plagues) that happened to the Egyptians helped to build the faith of these slaves so that they would trust what God would tell them to do through Moses. They certainly did not start out trusting what God was initiating and they blamed Moses and Aaron for the increased troubles they were experiencing from their Egyptian masters. The sacrifice process had already started and their first reaction was to avoid the pain and remain in slavery. The choice was survival or sacrifice. If survival (avoiding the pain and the price to pay) was the option, then there would be no deliverance. That option was not part of God’s sovereign plan of salvation for all humanity.

The various plagues impacted those in Egypt in different ways. The first three (water into blood, frogs, and lice) was experienced by everyone – Israelites and Egyptians. We can see similar things happening today when natural disasters happen in the world or in our nation. The impact of some significant or tragic events affects everyone. The next six plagues were specifically limited to affect areas occupied by the Egyptians and not the area where the Israelites lived. This distinction was evidence that the disasters were not just random events but were specifically planned and carried out under divine orders. Arguments can be made that some plagues (bad situations) that affect people impact some areas or groups but do not harm others simply because of choices people make. The tenth plague was different from the other

nine. It was to impact all (people and livestock) living in Egypt and it would have deadly and irreversible implications. Therefore, protection was needed for anyone to escape the impact of the plague.

This visitation of death was going to be on the “land of Egypt” and would be limited to the most important or most valuable asset (the prized possessions) in their lives which was the first born of humans and animals. Deliverance from the judgment of God (death of firstborn) would come through having faith (trusting) in and being obedient to God’s way. Since there was a “requirement” for a death, then a propitiation for that requirement was the death of a substitute sacrifice. By faith, Abraham offered up his son Isaac and God provided a substitute to die in the place of Isaac which was a foreshadowing of what was happening to secure deliverance for the descendants who were exposed to death that was coming upon the land of Egypt. In the same way, each family of the Israelites put to death a substitute and the evidence of that death was the blood which was displayed on the door frame of their homes. The Egyptians either were not aware of this substitutionary provision or would have thought it to be foolishness.

This tenth plague (death of firstborns) was also meant to discredit the chief god of the Egyptians named Ra who was associated with the sun or the life-giving force of nature. The first nine plagues that God had used to afflict the Egyptians were bad conditions and these were costly, however, each was such that given enough time, the Egyptians could recover from the affliction. There was not a definitive “knockout punch” in these nine plagues and those who are hard hearted will resist until they can resist no more. The tenth plague would show the power of the God of the Israelites over life and death. We see the description and forewarning of what was going to happen in Chapter 11 of Exodus and that was followed in Chapter 12 by specific instructions of what the Israelites were to do to avoid the effects of this final plague which would insure their deliverance from bondage. The completion of the ten plagues was literally the answer to Pharaoh’s question raised during the first meeting he had with Moses and Aaron when he asked “Who is ‘I AM’ that I should care what He said?”

Instruction – 12:21-23

²¹ Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. ²² Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. ²³ For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. Exodus 12:21–23 (ESV)

From the Garden of Eden until the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the shedding of blood for the remission of sin and protection from the consequences of sin has been central to God's dealing with mankind. This theme of sacrifice was carried into the worship experience of the Hebrew people and had its purpose in pointing to God's ultimate remedy for the sin problem – the shed blood (death) of Jesus Christ.

There are many significant parallels and inferences that could possibly be drawn between the physical and the spiritual. The family: in the Passover celebration the father would take the lead and in doing so would include his family under the protection. In our Christian walk we see time and time again that if the father in the family is serious in his Christian walk that the family will usually follow his lead and put their trust in Jesus. After the giving of the Law and the various ordinances after the Israelites came out of Egypt, the observance of the Passover was incorporated with Tabernacle or Temple activities and the priests were involved in the killing of the Passover sacrifice. So, at the original Passover occurrence, the father in the family fulfilled

the role of the priest.

The need to stay under the protection of the blood (meaning the identification with the death of the substitute): In the Passover, the people were not to go outside the house after the blood had been applied until the next morning. In our Christian walk, we are afforded protection because of the death of Jesus Christ and our identification with His death on our behalf. This protection is from the consequences of the worldly way of life since we have died to that way. When we believe God and respond to His provision for forgiveness by repentance, then we choose to walk with the Lord and remain under the protection that God gives. We cannot expect to escape the judgment on the world if we apply the blood to the door post and then go out and spent the night with the Egyptians.

Celebration – 12:24-28

²⁴ You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. ²⁵ And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. ²⁶ And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ ²⁷ you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’ ” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. ²⁸ Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. Exodus 12:24–28 (ESV)

They could not afford to forget the lessons of Egypt and what it was like to live in slavery nor could they afford to forget that it was by the mighty hand of God that they were delivered out of that circumstance. This event was the most significant thing that had happened to the Children of Israel up until that time and retained top significance until the death of Christ. One way to not forget the significance of something important is to commemorate the event with an annual observance. This observance is still an important part of the life of most Jews today. In the church we also observe this event indirectly when we celebrate the Passion of Christ that was the fulfillment of what the Passover foreshadowed.

Celebrations help us remember significant events or significant people and what they stood for. Sometimes celebrations involve significant financial costs as we see in our observance of Christmas. Is it worth the cost? Maybe, maybe not. If we just celebrate and never think about why we celebrate, then we might argue that such celebrations are a poor use of resources. The other alternative is to plan the celebrations around the significance of the event so that we can really remember and learn the lessons of the past.

In a more general sense, we should cultivate the memory of our own salvation experience. Most Christians can only vaguely remember how it was when they accepted Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives. Many can't remember because they really did not experience or realize any noticeable change in their lives. Sometime people will express a preference for the way of Christ but they don't come to the point of belief in it. There is a difference in “cultural or convenience Christianity” and realizing that “committed Christianity” is the only kind that matters.

Victory – 12:29-32

²⁹ At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. ³⁰ 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 someone was not dead. ³¹ Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. ³² Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!” Exodus 12:29–32 (ESV)

After the ninth plague of darkness for three days, Pharaoh told Moses and Aaron that the people of Israel could go and “serve the Lord,” but they could not take their livestock. Since sacrifices were essential to their worship of God, this was not an acceptable option. Once again Pharaoh refused to let them go. During that last meeting Moses and Aaron were threatened with death if Pharaoh ever saw them again. Moses then told Pharaoh of one final plague that would happen regarding the death of the firstborns. Obviously, Pharaoh did not believe what Moses said; however, he did remember it after the plague happened and it was obviously too late since God’s judgment had fallen on all of Egypt.

Finally, God had gotten the attention of Pharaoh in such a way that he did not wait until morning but summoned Moses and Aaron and begged them to leave and to take their flocks and herds – but, just go away. Pharaoh realized that the gods he worshiped were “no match” for the God of the people of Israel. Great disasters had already occurred, but nothing had harmed Pharaoh as an individual. It is likely that he had concluded that further resistance would be directed to him personally. That may be why he requested that Moses “bless” or make intercession for him. As some of the oldest commentaries (Jarchi) noted it was likely as he (Pharaoh) found his firstborn, and the heir to his crown and kingdom, was dead, he might justly fear that he would be next, and perhaps very soon. Therefore, (he) desired their prayers for him, that his life might be spared.

The fear of death for those who are not in a right relationship with the divine Creator and Lord of all is a reality. This fear and realization that divine judgment follows death was why many people of the various nations responded to the gospel message that was proclaimed by the church. What had happened in Egypt that night was a parable of the relationship of God with mankind that had rebelled against God by sinning. Since the wages of sin is death, a means of deliverance from sin and death was needed and was provided by God Who became the substitutionary sacrifice to pay the price (death) for us in the same way that the death of the lamb protected the people of Israel who believed God.