

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END AND THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Text: Exodus 12:1-28; 42

For 400 years the nation of Israel had been in bondage. Now in one day everything will change. The original Passover was an end to slavery. Bondage was beginning to end. As Israel started out on their journey, the eventual goal was the Promised Land, which was promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the generations following. This was the end of the beginning, they were headed home.

Many are very happy to see 2022 come to a close, not because they are writing the year off, but some just need a new start. We've learned much in a year, things to do, things not to do or things to do differently. So today is interpreted as the beginning of an end. It is also interpreted as the end of the beginning: today is the day to start toward promised land. I agree with Alan Redpath and other Bible teachers that Canaan or the Promised Land is a picture of the victorious Christian life, not Heaven. There were delays in getting started on the journey to the promised land. There were ten plagues Egypt had to experience before Pharaoh finally let God's people go and even then it was not without one final attempt at the Red Sea to block the escape. There were definitely detours from the rebellion of the sons of Korah, to the failure at Kadesh Barnea, to the forty years of wilderness wandering. Even through the delays and detours, this day marks the beginning of the trip that takes Israel to their desired haven in God's perfect will. Exodus 12:2: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

Dennis Prager in his commentary on Exodus said, "The Torah is referring to the Hebrew month of Nisan. The Jewish calendar has two different first months. One is Tishrei, the autumn month that includes Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). It is celebrated as a time of repentance, new beginnings, and the creation of the world. The other is this month of Nisan, the spring month that includes Passover. It is celebrated as a time of rebirth, renewal, and the beginning of the Jewish nation. Virtually every nation celebrates both the beginning of the New Year and the beginning of its country. In Torah they are both New Years."

How appropriate that a New Year's celebration for Israel would be the Passover. Let's talk about the significance:

### I. THE LAMB IS CHOSEN

Exodus 12:3,4

All ten plagues that God sent to Egypt were direct castigations to the heathen false gods. Soon God was going to "lay down the law" in citing the first two commandments: Exodus 20:2-4a: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image....” The tenth and last plague, the death of the firstborn males, was a judgment on the false god, Isis, the protector of children. It is important to understand there is something very significant in God choosing a male lamb as the sacrifice that would be used in the birthing of freedom from bondage. Exodus 12:12. Exodus 8:25-26 says: “And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?” This passage suggests that Moses recognizes that the Israelites are going to sacrifice an animal that is sacred to the Egyptians, and that this would be an abomination for the Egyptians. Ostensibly, this is because the ram was the sacred animal of two Egyptian gods, Amun and Khnum. Amun was a very important god in ancient Egypt; he was seen as the king of the gods and was syncretized with the sun god as Amun-Ra. Khnum is the god who creates individual humans on his potter’s wheel. As the ram was also sacred to the priests of Khnum, they too would not have looked fondly on sacrificing a sheep.

The message is twofold in the Passover. Egyptian hieroglyphics reveal these freakish looking gods with the body of a man and the head of a ram who can offer no hope and no help. The king of Egyptian gods cannot help and the so-called creator god cannot deliver. But in Christ, King of Kings and Creator, redemption is purchased through His blood as the Lamb of God. And although He died, He rose again to die no more. As the Lamb of God He stands after having been slain (Revelation 5:6) and devours all opposition as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

## II. THE LAMB IS SLAIN

### Exodus 12:5-10

A. Specification: Exodus 12:5. The lamb must be without blemish. I Peter 1:18, 19: “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.”

B. Contemplation: Exodus 12:6. The lamb was chosen and then kept for four days then afterwards the lamb was slain. The family had time to talk about what was taking place and why it was taking place. As we see where we’ve been for a year and, Lord willing, as we consider where we’re going in 2023, we also should focus on why Christ came and why He died. Our year should begin and end with contemplation of Christ. Hebrews 12:3: “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

C. Application: Exodus 12:7. Exodus 12:22: "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." Had the Jewish family slain the lamb, but did not place the shed blood on the upper door post (lintel) and two side posts, the eldest son would have died. The bloody door promised an exit out of Egypt and entrance into the land of promise. Christ promises in Revelation 3:8: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Paul also reminds us in I Corinthians 16:9, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Christ has given us everlasting life (John 3:16); let us not fail to enter into the more abundant life (John 10:9, 10).

D. Dedication: Exodus 12:8-10. Christ gave his all. Let us give our all back to Him in appreciation.

E. Transportation: Exodus 12:11. After the application of the blood and the meal, there was to be no "dilly-dallying." New Year's is a great time to put aside procrastination and do what you've been needing to do.

### III. THE LAMB IS REMEMBERED

Exodus 12:12-14; 24-27; 42

It has been quoted, "The Old Testament is The New Testament concealed; the New Testament is The Old Testament revealed." An old Puritan once said the two Testaments are the two lips with which God speaks to us. The Passover is probably the most celebrated historical Jewish holiday still commemorated by those in the Jewish faith. It is difficult to see how the unbelieving can celebrate the Passover and not see Jesus. I Corinthians 5:7: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

There is power in remembering what it took to save us by grace through faith. How can we forget our sinless Savior? Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." How can we forget the price He willingly paid for our sins? Philippians 2:8b: "...He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." 1 Peter 3:18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

-Pastor Pope-