

DHW

THE BOOK of EXODUS

Chapter 11 & 12

LESSON 10

INTRODUCTION

God had demonstrated His longsuffering and mercy towards an unrepentant and rebellious Pharaoh. But one final plague was necessary to let Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and also the children of Israel know that the LORD (Yahweh) God was Sovereign and Almighty. Exodus 11 & 12 describe the final plague and its outcome. At the same time, God instituted the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread to commemorate this exodus of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt to a new life of service to Him. These two feasts were observed together and they were an ordinance or sacrament in which the Israelites ought to obey for all their generations. Today the Israelites still observe the Feast of Passover. Each generation is told of the great ten plagues by which their forefathers who were slaves in Egypt were delivered by the LORD God. They

are not to forget but to remember it and praised the LORD.

The Feast of Passover which required the sacrifice of an unblemished lamb was a foreshadowing of the future coming of the true Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. This is a prophecy that has no parallel in the history of mankind. This is another testimony that the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, is the one true and living God, and that there is no one else beside Him.

The study of these two chapters will help us to understand and appreciate many of the things which we believe in Christ and which we practise in the church. The following is an outline of the two chapters:

1. The LORD instructed Moses about the tenth plague (11:1-10);
2. The LORD instituted the Feast of Passover (12:1-28);
3. The LORD smote the firstborn of man and beast (12:29-30);
4. Pharaoh let the children of Israel leave Egypt (12:31-39);
5. The LORD gave final instructions to Moses and Aaron before leaving Egypt (12:40-51).

STUDY THE WORD

The LORD Instructs Moses about the Tenth Plague

In spite of the nine plagues against the land of Egypt, Pharaoh had stubbornly rejected the request by God through His servant Moses to let the children of Israel leave Egypt to worship and serve Him. God had been very patient, longsuffering and merciful. But this time the LORD told Moses that he would strike one final plague and Pharaoh would not only let the children of Israel go, but also drive them out. In addition, the LORD would cause the minds and hearts of the Egyptians to willingly and freely give to the children of Israel whatever they would ask from them even gold, silver and clothes.¹ It was a freewill offering or gift. The Egyptians were too happy that the Israelites were leaving lest they would have to suffer more plagues. They were prepared to give to the Israelites whatever it would take to let them leave Egypt. In this regard we need to recognize that God is Sovereign and still on the throne controlling the heavens and the earth, and in the affairs of men. It also demonstrates that all

things on earth belong to Him. Although men may have possession of these things, ultimately they all belong to Him and He has the power to dispense them as He wills. He has the power to move the hearts of men and women to act in accordance with His plan and purpose, and yet these men and women act on their own free will! This is a great mystery but true. The Word of God is replete with such instances.²

The LORD revealed to Moses the nature of this final plague. The LORD would smite the firstborn of Pharaoh, all the firstborn of his subjects and also the firstborn of all the animals (11:5). While there would be a great cry throughout the land of Egypt such as they had never experienced before, but in the land of Goshen, there would be peace and quietness, *not a dog move his tongue against man or beast* (an expression that not even a dog would growl or bark). The LORD God of Israel made this distinction between His people and the Egyptians.

The LORD also revealed that all of Pharaoh's servants would come

¹ KJV translation of "borrow" is not appropriate for it raises an ethical question. It makes the Israelites deceitful. The Hebrew *sha'al* is used 173 times, 94 of which are translated "to ask." The context demands that it be translated "to ask" instead of "to borrow."

² One classic case is the betrayal, crucifixion and death of Christ which had been predetermined by God but Judas, the religious leaders and Pilate were all guilty and responsible for their wicked actions. Our own salvation was foreordained before the foundation of the world, and did we not accept Christ of our own freewill? So those who reject Christ cannot excuse themselves that they are not elected. They reject Christ of their own freewill and they are liable and guilty.

bowing before Moses and begging him to leave with all the children of Israel. The reason why the LORD performed those signs and wonders was because Pharaoh refused *to hearken* unto Him. Hence the LORD hardened his heart and after this final plague, Pharaoh had to let Israel go, as the LORD had said. The sovereignty of the LORD God is without question. He rules all of creation and man according to His will. Pharaoh believed that he was a god, but he and his other gods of Egypt were helpless and could do nothing.

The Feast of Passover

Chapter 12 records the institution of the LORD'S Passover (12:1). The LORD instructed Moses and Aaron concerning the nature and importance of the Passover. The very day and month that they observed the Feast of Passover would be the first month of the year. On the tenth day of the month each household would take a lamb. The lamb had to be a male, without any defect. The lamb would be kept for four days, and on the fourteenth day of the month the lamb, which would be called the Passover Lamb, would be slain in the evening. The blood of the Passover Lamb would be smeared onto the two door posts and the upper door post of the entrance to every home of the children of Israel (12:7). Members of

the household must remain indoors to eat the Passover Lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (12:8). The lamb must be roasted with fire together with its head, legs and the *purtenance* (internal parts like the heart and liver). It must *not* be eaten raw, or sodden at all with water. Nothing should be left over, and whatever was left over would be completely burned.

All of them should be fully dressed when they partake of the Passover Lamb. They should eat in haste as if they were about to go on a journey (12:11). This denotes the fact that the land of Egypt was not their permanent place of abode. The permanent place of abode was the land, which God had promised them. They were only sojourners or temporary residents in Egypt. This is a dramatic illustration of us as Christians who are actually only strangers and sojourners in this world, which is not our home for our true and permanent home is in heaven.³

On the night that they ate the Passover Lamb in every Israelite home, the LORD would pass through all the land of Egypt and smite every firstborn

³ **Hebrews 11:3** *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

1 Peter 2:11 *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;*

of man and beast. But when the LORD saw the blood on the door posts He would *pass over* the children of Israel and their firstborn would be saved.

In addition to eating the Passover Lamb, the children of Israel were instructed to eat only unleavened bread for the next seven days. And they should remove all leaven in their houses. And if anyone disobeyed and ate leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, he would be *cut off from Israel* meaning he would be excommunicated (12:15). Leaven is a kind of substance which was added to the dough to produce fermentation. In the New Testament, leaven is usually explained as a symbol of sin.⁴

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, referred to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Passover (1 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.*

⁴**Matthew 16:6** *Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*

1 Corinthians 5:6 *Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 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: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*

Galatians 5:9 *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

The Feast of Passover, which was instituted in Egypt about one thousand five hundred years before Christ, is a type of prophecy that foreshadowed the actual and real Passover, the Lord Jesus Christ. The killing of the Passover Lamb predicted the death and shedding of blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ when the latter came to him as the Lamb of God (John 1:29):

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

The significance of the Feast of Passover and the Unleavened Bread is found in the New Testament. In order for the Israelites to be saved from death they simply had to obey what they were told to do by Moses. Anyone who did not kill the Passover Lamb and smear the blood on the door posts of his house could not escape the judgment of God even if the person was an Israelite. However, if an Egyptian, who had been told by an Israelite to do the same, and if he obeyed, he too would be saved from judgment of God. Both Egyptians and Israelites had sinned against God and this was the only way to be saved from the divine judgment of the LORD God. Therefore the children of Israel should not boast that they were

holier than the Egyptians. The LORD God had mercy on His chosen people.

Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb, who died and shed His blood on the cross for us. The Word of God declares that the penalty of sin is death. The message of salvation is that whosoever believes and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved from God's eternal judgment and condemnation (John 5:24):

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Just as the Israelites had to eat unleavened bread and remove all leaven from the house, the person who has believed and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ must live a life of consecration and godliness. The application is used by the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 5:7, 8):

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: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

True repentance is evidenced by how we live out what we believe in the Word of God. One proof of our

genuine acceptance of Christ Jesus into our life as Lord and Saviour is to obey the commandments of God and do His will. How can we know that we are saved except by living a godly life which is honouring and glorifying to God. If we call ourselves Christians and continue to live in our own selfish way, not caring for the law of God, our profession of faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is doubtful. James wrote in his epistle (2:22): *Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.*⁵ The Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). And if we do not walk in a manner that pleases the Holy Spirit, how can we have the assurance that we are the children of God?⁶

The LORD Smites the Firstborn

The LORD God is not One who would lie. When He has said it He will do it. The smiting of all the firstborn of man and beast was not an empty warning. In the darkness of midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the

⁵ Read and understand the whole chapter of the epistle of James.

⁶ **Romans 8:13** For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on the Egyptian throne to the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon, *and all the firstborn of cattle* (12:29). It must have been a terrible and horrible night for the Egyptians. One can imagine the sudden death of all their firstborn, either the son or daughter, if he or she was the firstborn. Imagine the *great cry* or wailing throughout the land of Egypt (12:30).

Pharaoh Says Go, Serve the LORD

Now Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron immediately in the night. Pharaoh literally commanded Moses to rise up and get out of Egypt saying, *go, serve the LORD, as ye have said* (12:31). He even asked Moses to bless him. The Egyptians were resolved that the children of Israel leave their land as soon as possible lest all of them would be dead. The Egyptians gave the Israelites flour and utensils for making dough. And the Israelites in accordance with the word of Moses asked the Egyptians for articles of *jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment* (12:35). The LORD God gave His people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. The Egyptians gave freely to the Israelites whatever they asked for (12:35, 36). It was a day of freedom, a day of new life and rejoicing for the people of God!

And so it would be on the appointed day, when God would divide the sinners from the saints in Christ Jesus; the unrepentant and rebellious sinners to everlasting torment in the lake of fire from “sinners saved by grace” to everlasting blessedness in heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The LORD’S Final Instructions to Moses and Aaron

The children of Israel had been living in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years since the day Jacob came to the land with his sons and families and servants. A distinction is made in the observance of the Feast of Passover between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The Israelites left Egypt. There were 600,000 *men* and if we include the women and children, the number could easily triple (12:37). An interesting factor is the fact that there was *a mixed multitude* which left with them (12:38). These were definitely non-Israelites. In keeping the Feast of Passover, the *mixed multitude*, which comprised strangers, foreigners, and hired servants might not partake of the Passover unless they too were circumcised. Circumcision was the sign of membership into the community of faith, which confessed to the LORD God of the Passover.

Similarly the Lord's Supper which is instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament is closely related to the Feast of Passover which was instituted by the LORD God in the Old Testament. It is therefore proper for today's churches to impose the requirement of every believer to be baptized in water first before he may partake of the Lord's Supper. Thus the LORD delivered His people and brought them out of bondage in Egypt and into a new life of worship and service unto Him.

PRACTICAL VALUE

It is appalling to some that the LORD God of love would do such a terrible act of killing all the firstborn of the Egyptians and also that of the animals. But we must remind ourselves that the same LORD God of the Scriptures is also Holy and Just. The soul that sins must be punished with death. That is why *it is appointed unto men once to die*, and there is no escape by anyone.⁷ All have sinned against God and the penalty is death (Romans 6:23). The question of God's judgment upon the unrepentant sinner is not whether there will be death but rather when and how the punishment would be. Such is the sovereign prerogative

⁷ Hebrew 9:27 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

of God. Who can tell Him what to do? The answer is no one.

But God offers the way of deliverance or salvation from death. In the Exodus account, the children of Israel had to smear the blood of the lamb on the door posts in order to be saved from the divine judgment as instructed by God. The visitation of the divine judgment on the Egyptians must be seen in the light of this truth. God was merciful. He did not wipe out the Egyptians, who believed and obeyed His commandment to kill the lamb and smear the blood on the door posts! Similarly, every man is a sinner and has sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none that seeks God.⁸ And the penalty of sin is death. All who have not believed and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ are already condemned. The fact that many of us are still alive is because God is longsuffering and merciful and desires that none should perish but that each one should repent of his sins. God would still be righteous and just if He smites all unrepentant sinners dead. But He would not for He is merciful and patient if sinners would repent of their

⁸**Romans 3:10** *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

sins and turn to Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, who died for the sins of sinners and resurrected on the third day.

A very important practical knowledge which we can draw from the Exodus record thus far is about the attributes and character of the LORD God. First, when we read the Exodus account, we must realise that it is not fiction or a fairy tale. It is a historic fact. Ask the Jews and they will tell you. Annually they remember and observe the Feast of Passover without fail since the day the feast was instituted. They look forward to the coming of their Messiah (in Greek, Christ). We as Christians look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver us from this sun-cursed world and also the destruction of the world. And God will create a new heaven and a new earth for all His blood-bought people to live forever with Him. We must be serious about the LORD God, who is and was and is to come!

Secondly, God has demonstrated through the ten plagues that He is Almighty for nothing is impossible with Him; He is Merciful and provided a way of deliverance from His divine judgment if man will obey Him; He is Jealous because He requires that man worships and serves Him and none other; He is Just for His judgment is without bias and prejudice; and He is

sovereign for He acts according to the counsel of His will. In view of all this knowledge of Him, we ought to worship and serve Him only. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* (Hebrews 10:31) AMEN.