

Maundy Thursday / April 9, 2020

Exodus 12:13

“The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land.”

The Passover was the most important sacred meal of the covenant God made with Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. The Passover was the annual remembrance of God’s deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The descendants of Jacob, also known as Israel, lived four centuries in Egypt. Joseph, the firstborn son of Israel and his wife Rachel, rose from the position of slave, to second in command of Egypt. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of the food supply; Joseph gathered food during seven years of plenty and distributed it, during seven years of famine. Among those who sought refuge in Egypt during the years of famine were Joseph’s father Israel, along with his brothers and their families. In the centuries after Joseph’s death, another Pharaoh arose who had no regard for the legacy of Joseph. He enslaved the descendants of Israel and made their lives bitter, by forcing them to build his monuments and by murdering their new born male children. God heard the cries of the children of Israel. He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He sent Moses to deliver them from the house of bondage.

Moses spoke to Pharaoh and conveyed the word of the Lord saying, *“Let my people go!”* Pharaoh laughed and asked *“Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice and let Israel go?”* The Lord showed Pharaoh that He is both God and supreme over the gods of Egypt by sending nine plagues, which the Egyptian gods were powerless to stop. Several times Pharaoh had a change of heart and agreed to set Israel free; but as soon as the plague was lifted he hardened his heart, changed his mind and would not set Israel free. There would be a tenth plague, the plague of death, in which the firstborn male of every house in Egypt would die. After this Pharaoh would obey the Lord and set Israel free. Moses instructed the children of Israel to sacrifice a lamb among their families, cook it, eat it and to mark the lintel and the doorposts of their homes with its blood. The only homes to be spared the plague of death, would be those marked with the blood of the lamb. When the angel saw the blood of the lamb, he would pass over and not bring death to those homes. Whenever Israel ate the Passover meal, they remembered how the Lord preserved the life of the firstborn and rescued their ancestors from slavery in Egypt through the blood of the lamb.

John the Baptist identified Jesus to his disciples as *“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”* What God did for the people of Israel at one time and in one place through many lambs, He would do for all the peoples of the world, through one Lamb. What God did for one people in a physical sense, rescuing them from bondage to a human tyrant, He would do spiritually for all people, rescuing us from bondage to sin, the devil and death, through the blood Jesus shed on the cross. Holy Communion is the sacred meal of the covenant God made new through Jesus and the sacrifice of His cross. Whenever we eat this sacred meal, we remember Jesus is the Lamb who rescues us from slavery to sin, bondage to the devil and the condemnation of death, through the blood of His cross.

God’s battle was not just against Pharaoh, it was against the gods of the Egyptians and everything else in the world that is falsely called a god. In judging the gods of the Egyptians, the Lord would show Himself to be the only God and Saviour of the world! On the eve of the Passover, God said to Moses, *“I will execute judgements on all the gods of Egypt.”* Centuries later Jesus gathered His disciples to eat the Passover meal. The next afternoon the Lord would execute judgement on the world, its gods and its sin, by giving Jesus into death on the cross. As they were eating Jesus, *“took bread and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to them, and said, ‘This is my body.’”* Then He took a cup, gave thanks, gave it to them and said, *“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”* He gave this meal to remember Him and His sacrifice, because the next day, He would offer Himself on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The Passover was the meal of the covenant God made with Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai, after He brought them out of Egypt and the house of bondage. Holy Communion is the meal of the covenant God made with all people through the blood Jesus shed on the cross, to atone for the sin of the world. Through Moses’ leadership and the blood of the many Passover lambs, the Lord redeemed Israel from bondage to the Egyptians and their gods. Through Jesus’ sacrifice as the Lamb, the Lord redeemed all people from bondage to the devil, sin and death. St. John wrote in his third letter of Jesus saying, *“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”* Jesus calls all people to Himself saying, *“Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.”* He calls us to Himself that He might wash away

our sin with His righteous blood, in the water of Holy Baptism and seal us in His grace with the Holy Spirit. God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt through Moses and the Passover lambs. God rescues all who believe from bondage to sin, the control of the devil and the condemnation of eternal death, through the blood of Jesus. He is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

Whenever Israel ate the sacred meal of the Covenant of Mount Sinai, they remembered the Lord; how He rescued their ancestors from Egypt and brought them into the land of promise. Whenever Christians eat the sacred meal of the New Covenant, we remember Jesus and that He has rescued us from sin, the devil and death. Whenever we eat of His body and drink of His blood under the forms of bread and wine, we receive forgiveness, the Holy Spirit and the promise of living in the presence of God in the resurrection of the Lamb, in a world in which sin, death and the devil are no more.

Jesus looked forward to that day as He ate the Passover with His disciples and instituted the sacred meal of the new covenant. He said, *“Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.”* These two sacred meals, the Passover and the Lord’s Supper point us to the day when God makes all things new and we feast with Jesus in the kingdom of God. Then will be fulfilled the words God spoke through Isaiah saying, *“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine... And He will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples...He will swallow up death forever.”* The Lord bless us with His grace and keep us in Jesus until the day we drink new wine with Him in the kingdom of God. In His name. Amen