

Saved by the Blood

*“They’re to take
some of the blood
and put it on the
two doorposts and
on the lintel of
the houses where
they eat the
[Passover] lamb.”*

—Exodus 12:7,

*International
Standard Version*

As we enter the spring months of March and April, Christian people from all parts of the world will gather together to give special remembrance to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. About the same time, Jewish people will also gather to celebrate the Feast

of Passover.

Each group uses its calendars and long-held traditions to determine the exact time to celebrate these religious occasions. Sometimes, these events may be separated by a few days and, at other times, by several weeks. According to the scriptural record, Israel’s Passover lamb was slain on the 14th day of their month, Abib, later called Nisan. (Deut. 16:1; Neh. 2:1) This corresponds to our months March or April, depending on the year.

Although Christians and Jews both celebrate these important events at this time of year, few

discern the true meaning and significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, who died as the Savior of the sin-sick human creation. Few also discern the full meaning of the Jews' Passover. The Apostle Peter explained that most are blinded to an appreciation of the deep things of God. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. ... But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."—II Pet. 1:3,9

God's Instructions

At the time our featured scripture was recorded, the nation of Israel was being held captive in Egypt. When the proper time came, God instructed the Israelites to apply the blood of the slain Passover lamb on the "side posts and on the upper door post of the houses." They were also instructed to roast the lamb and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. (Exod. 12:8) The context of this text also provides other important details and perspectives in connection with God's special instructions to the Israelites.

We read, "The LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next

unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.”—Exod. 12:1-6

The Slain Lamb

These explicit directions contain a great amount of significant symbolism. For example, the reference to the “land of Egypt” points to Satan’s present dominion over the earth and its people. “In whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—II Cor. 4:4

The “beginning of months” is the basis for calculating the exact day the Passover was to be celebrated. The new moon nearest to the spring equinox marked the beginning of the first Jewish month, Abib. The sacrificial lamb was to be selected on the “tenth day” of the first month. This pointed forward to Jesus’ future arrival at Jerusalem as the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” and in fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy. (Matt. 21:1-9; John 1:29; Zech. 9:9) Noting further the account in Exodus chapter 12, the lamb was to be a year-old male and without blemish. This illustrated Jesus’ perfection as the future unblemished “Lamb of God.” (I Pet. 1:19) The Passover lamb was then slain on the “fourteenth day of the same month” and eaten that night. The Passover feast,

also called the “feast of unleavened bread,” began the next day and lasted for seven days.—Exod. 12:15-17

Firstborn—Under the Blood

Further to these directions, we read, “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”—Exod. 12:12-14

In these scriptures, reference is made to passing through the land of Egypt at “night.” This pictures the dark night of sin and death through which the people of God have been passing since Pentecost. (Col. 1:13; I Pet. 2:9) The “firstborn” picture the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” These are under the lamb’s blood and are striving to have a share in the heavenly phase of Christ’s kingdom.—Heb. 12:23

The firstborn of Israel were later exchanged for the whole tribe of Levi, which was counted as belonging to God. “The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the

day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD.”—Num. 3:11-13

A Memorial or Remembrance

Blood symbolizes life, and when the Passover lamb was slain, it represented sacrificed life. (Lev. 17:11) The blood of the sacrificed lamb was then used in accordance with the divine will to represent the precious blood of our Lord Jesus that would be applied on behalf of the sin-sick human family many centuries later. Our Lord’s sacrificial blood is the only means whereby we may be saved from the sentence of death that was placed upon Adam and Eve because of their disobedience to the law of God.—I Pet. 1:18,19; Rev. 1:5

God instructed the people of Israel to remember the specific time of this event, and to observe it each year as a remembrance. He said, “This day shall be unto you for a memorial.” (Exod. 12:14) This serves to illustrate the greater Memorial that Jesus instituted when he and his disciples were gathered together in the upper room. At that time, he asked them to partake of the loaf, which he said represented his body, and the cup, which showed his sacrificial blood. He then said to them, “This do in remembrance of me.” (I Cor. 11:23-26) He would die a few hours later for the sins of the world.

Quoting Luke’s account, we read: “[Jesus] took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave unto [his disciples], saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner after

supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you.”—
Luke 22:19,20, *Revised Version*

The Plagues

When God’s time clock of the ages struck, it marked the time for the Israelites’ release from Egyptian bondage. Their long-sought deliverance had arrived. However, Pharaoh and his taskmasters were not willing to set them free. They refused to let the Israelites go forth to the promised land of Canaan. One after another the Lord sent various plagues upon the people of Egypt, but gave them relief when their Pharaoh sought mercy and made promises that he had no intention of keeping. See Exodus chapters 7-10.

Finally, God’s servant Moses announced a tenth and final plague. A great calamity would be inflicted upon the firstborn in every family of Egypt, and they would all die in one night. In the homes of the humblest peasants, as well as in the palace of the Pharaoh, great mourning would take place throughout Egypt, and they would be glad to let the Israelites go.—Exod. 11:1-8

True to Moses’ announcement, “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. 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.”—Exod. 12:29-33

Prepared for a Journey

It is noted in Exodus chapters 7-10 that the first three plagues were common to all in the land of Egypt, including the district in which the Israelites lived. However, the next six plagues affected only the districts occupied by the Egyptians. The tenth and last plague was declared to be common to the entire land of Egypt, including the part apportioned to the Israelites, who were under the blood.

However, the children of Israel had been instructed to show their faith and obedience to the will of God by providing a sacrificial lamb whose blood was to be sprinkled upon the sides and lintels of their doorways, and its flesh eaten in the same night, with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. They had full faith that, because of the lamb's blood upon the doorposts and lintels of their homes, by remaining “under the blood” they would not share in the calamity when God would smite the firstborn of Egypt with death. Those who ate of the lamb waited with staff in hand and girded for the journey, expecting that God would make the Egyptians willing to let them go.—Exod. 12:7-13

Features of the Law

The Israelites were commanded to remember and celebrate each year this Passover feast that was

given to them by God through Moses. It was one of their greatest national memorials, and it is still celebrated by Jews in all parts of the world as an indication of their measure of respect for the meaning of this ancient custom.

The many features of the Mosaic Law were divinely designed to foreshadow various blessings that would be poured upon all the families of the earth in God's due time, and in the proper order. In the case of the Passover celebration, the death of the lamb foreshadowed the death of Jesus as a perfect man. The sprinkling of the lamb's blood symbolized the imputation of the merit of Jesus' ransom sacrifice to the passed-over class during this nighttime of sin and death. As was the case with the Israelites, it is this "firstborn" class who first benefit from the shed blood of the lamb. (I John 1:7; Eph. 1:3-7) Blessed are those whose eyes of faith see that Jesus was indeed the Lamb of God. By means of the blood of Jesus, the cancellation of Adamic sin was made possible by the payment of Adam's penalty, a penalty wherein the whole world lost the favor of God and came under the divine sentence of death.

It was necessary that before this curse of death and its accompanying pangs of sorrow and pain could be lifted, a satisfaction of justice be provided. As the Scriptures declare: "Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."—Rom. 5:18

The Firstfruits

As he was moved by the Holy Spirit of God, John the Revelator wrote, "I looked, and behold, the Lamb

was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.”
—Rev. 14:1-4, *New American Standard Bible*

These inspired words of God point to the glorified Christ, head and body, as the “first fruits to God and to the Lamb.” This implies that there will also be “after fruits” in the ultimate plan and purpose of our loving Heavenly Father. This is indeed so. It was God’s purpose to save all of the children of Israel, not just the firstborn. As a nation, they represented the entire human family, who will be given an opportunity to come into harmony with God and be granted eternal life in the future land of promise—the restored perfect earth.

Thus was the whole nation of Israel miraculously delivered by the Lord through Moses. They were led by him on a pathway across the channel of the Red Sea that had been especially prepared for them by divine power that controlled the winds and the tides. (Exod. 14:21-30) Not one Israelite

was left behind. This wonderful event illustrates the ultimate deliverance of the whole world from the power of Satan. All will be given the opportunity to come into accord with the righteous laws that will be established under the administration of Christ's future reign over the earth. Truly, we can echo the words that the Apostle Paul wrote when he said Christ Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—I Tim. 2:6

Two Fulfillments

Deliverance from death depended upon the first-born children of Israel remaining under the lamb's blood when God's death angel passed them by. They were the only ones who were under the blood and who were subject to death. They were all delivered that night as shown in the Passover picture. As such, the firstborn of Israel were the immediate beneficiaries of the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb.

During this present Christian age, Jesus' foot-step followers are also under the blood. They have accepted the merit of Jesus' blood and are under its protection. (I John 1:7) They have been called in advance of the world. They have had the eyes of their understanding opened to a realization of their condition of sin and bondage and their need of deliverance. (Eph. 1:18) They have responded to the marvelous grace of God and have presented their lives to him in full consecration. (Rom. 12:1) Because of their faith in the shed blood of the "Lamb of God," they have fellowship with "the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."—I John 1:3

The Apostle Paul explains that consecration during the present age signifies baptism into Jesus' death.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”—Rom. 6:3-5

It is a matter of utmost importance that those who have given their lives to God continue to abide under the precious blood of sprinkling. For any to go out from this condition of grace would imply a disregard for the mercy of our loving Heavenly Father. It would signify that they do not appreciate his goodness, or their share in the saving power of Jesus’ blood. “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”—Heb. 10:26

Deliverance of the Entire World

Members of the “church of the firstborn” have received the merit of Jesus’ blood in advance of the world. Christ entered “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” (Heb. 9:24) When the church is complete, the merit, or value, of our Savior’s blood will become available for the entire human family. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”—John 10:14-16

The second great benefit that occurred in the land of Egypt was the deliverance of the entire nation of Israel when they were led by Moses across the Red Sea. This remarkable event pictures the ultimate recovery of the whole human creation from the bondage of sin and death. The promised blessings will be available to the world under the establishment of Christ's kingdom and by the terms of the New Covenant. (Jer. 31:31-34) At that time, all who desire to follow righteousness and obey the greater Moses—our Lord Jesus—will be granted life rights that were lost because of Adamic sin.—Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:20-25

The long night of sin and death will have passed, and the glorious morning of deliverance will have come. (Ps. 30:5) The Christ, head and body, will lead forth and deliver all Israel, all the people of God. At that time, all shall know and be glad to reverence, honor, and obey the will of God.—Acts 15:16,17; Rom. 11:26-36

Christ Our Passover

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth, he told them, "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—I Cor. 5:7,8, *English Standard Version*

In this scripture, the apostle was addressing the "church of the firstborn" whose names are written in heaven. (Heb. 12:23) He was admonishing them to cleanse themselves from all sin and unrighteousness

as represented by the leaven of malice and wickedness. They were instead to seek righteousness and truth, as illustrated by partaking of the unleavened bread.

By eating the symbolic lamb, we appropriate Christ's merit to ourselves. We also "put on" Christ to the extent of our ability, by which we are transformed into his glorious image and character. (Rom. 12:2; 13:14; Gal. 3:27) We feed upon him even as the Jews fed upon the Passover lamb. The bitter herbs, which aided and whetted the Israelites' literal appetites, were an illustration of our bitter experiences and trials. These are provided for us to help wean our affections from earthly things, and they give us an increasing appetite to feed upon the lamb and the unleavened bread of truth.

In the world, we have "no continuing city." Instead, as strangers and travelers, we go with staff in hand and girded for the journey to heavenly Canaan. (Heb. 13:14; I Pet. 2:11) All of the glorious blessings that our loving Heavenly Father has in reservation for the church of the firstborn will be given to those who have faithfully accepted the "Lamb of God" and the merit of his saving blood.—Eph. 1:3-7

Let Us Keep the Feast

Soon, many will gather together once again to observe the Memorial of Jesus' death as the great Passover lamb. As we keep the feast again this year, let us rejoice in the precious blood of Jesus that was shed on our behalf and that will be testified to the world in due time. "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the

everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”—Heb. 13:20,21, *New King James Version* ■