

Dwelling Under the Blood

“Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

—I Corinthians 10:11, New American Standard Bible

ACCORDING TO THE APOSTLE Paul’s statement in our opening text, God’s dealings with Israel contain valuable lessons for spiritual Israelites of this present Gospel Age. One of the outstanding lessons for us is that contained in the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb in connection with God’s deliverance of Israel from their enslavement in Egypt. God’s specially chosen people were still under Egyptian bondage, despite the nine plagues which had already been visited upon the land. All of these plagues were sent by God, but were not fully effective in bringing about the deliverance of the Israelites.

This does not mean, however, that God’s purpose in the first nine plagues was thwarted. Quite to the contrary, for he had various illustrations of future events in mind when these scenes were enacted. Hence, God was not dealing with Pharaoh nor with

the Israelites merely with the thought of what was being accomplished in connection with them. Regardless of the immediate result of many of Israel's experiences, a glorious divine purpose was accomplished because all that happened to them was "for an example," says the apostle, and they were "written for our instruction."

It is central to our present subject to understand that it was the tenth plague that brought relief to the Israelites, but this was only through the sprinkling of the lintels and doorposts of the houses of Israel with the blood of a Passover lamb. (Exod. 12:1-14,21-42) To us this seems to say that while all of God's providences are designed to bring us closer to deliverance from the bondage of this world, yet actual deliverance is accomplished only through coming under the blood of "Christ our passover," who has been sacrificed for us.—I Cor. 5:7

It is important to note the fact that the mere slaying of Israel's Passover lamb was not sufficient. As stated in Exodus 12:21-23, the Israelites had to bring themselves under the sprinkling of the blood in order to be assured of divine protection and deliverance. It is the same with spiritual Israelites of the present age. They must, through faith, bring themselves under the blood of the greater Passover lamb. Mere belief in the fact that Jesus died for the sins of the world is not sufficient. Faith in the fact that he died for us personally, and that through his blood we may have "our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience," is also required. (Heb. 10:22, *English Standard Version*) Only thus can we be assured of being made "free from the law of sin and death."—Rom. 8:2

This deliverance, however, is not in itself complete, although it does become the means to that end. The sprinkling of our hearts is not to be thought of as a one-time event, which can then be put aside as far as our walk of life is concerned. Rather, the result must be a daily dedication and heart obedience to the doing of God's will, and to the development of the many fruits and qualities of character which were so exemplified by Jesus, our Passover lamb.—Gal. 5:22-25; Col. 3:12-14

Faith in the blood of Jesus also inspires a glorious hope. The Apostle Paul speaks of this faith as the “basis of things hoped for.” (Heb. 11:1, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) What is it that we hope for? It is for that full deliverance from this present world of sin, suffering and death that was illustrated by the complete release of Israel's firstborn from the slavery in Egypt. The apostle says concerning Jesus, “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.”—Gal. 1:4

In the Book of Romans, Paul tells us about another deliverance to which all Christians should look forward. This is a deliverance from what he calls “this body of death.” Concerning it the apostle says, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” “Thanks be to God,” he then answers, that deliverance comes “through Jesus Christ our Lord! There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”—Rom. 7:24,25; 8:1, *ESV*

Even now we have a foretaste, as it were, of our deliverance from the body of death, that is, from the flesh. Paul describes it as a deliverance into the “glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21)

This liberty allows us to be called “children of God,” and is only possible by the revealing power and influence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. The apostle further testifies, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—I Cor. 2:9,10

While it is true, as the apostle declares, that God has already revealed these things to us by his spirit, yet we are unable to appreciate them as fully and completely as when our deliverance into the glorious liberty of the sons of God will be complete. The Apostle John declares on this point that while we are now the sons of God, yet “it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (I John 3:2) Similarly, Israel could, by faith, already see the land of promise from afar, but to experience its goodness they had to await actual entry into it.

FAITH A MEANS TO AN END

Thus we see that it is Jesus’ blood that contains the merit, or value, for our release from Adamic condemnation. This merit becomes ours through faith in that which God has provided, the “free gift” of grace, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:15) However, such faith does not bring to completion our salvation. Rather, it is the means to that end. It evidences itself in the glorious hope to which it gives rise, and this hope brings the impetus that drives us ever onward to the fullness of the glory that is promised. Concerning

this we read, “Everyone who has this hope in Christ keeps himself pure, just as Christ is pure.”—I John 3:3, *Good News Bible*

Our basis of faith is God-given, for without the blood of Jesus, which the Father himself supplied, there would have been nothing upon which faith could lay hold. This is what the Apostle Paul tells us: “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”—Eph. 2:8-10

As the foregoing text shows, while faith is the means whereby we bring ourselves under the blood, “good works” must result from our faith. We must build upon our faith structure, adding to it, the Apostle Peter says: noble character, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. (II Pet. 1:4-8, *Weymouth New Testament*) It is only thus that one’s calling out of figurative Egypt, and his selection to be one with Christ in the glories of the kingdom, are made sure. Affirming this, the apostle adds, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—vs. 11

The blood of Christ does not provide to us the opportunity of deliverance and salvation unless we bring ourselves under it by obedient faith. With this accomplished, our journey toward the spiritual Canaan and entering into God’s rest is only begun. Many indeed will be the trials and experiences as we journey through the various wilderness testings until we enter fully into the heavenly land of promise.

The Scriptures tell us that Israel did not enter into rest because of disobedience and unbelief. (Heb. 3:10-19) This should indeed serve as a very timely and valuable admonition to us. The apostle assures us that there is a “rest” which yet remains for the spiritual Israelites of God of this age, but if we are to enter into that rest, we must labor to be faithful and obedient.—Heb. 4:1-11

The deliverance from Egypt and the prospect of an abundant entrance into Canaan were based entirely upon the blood of the Passover lamb. However, this meant deliverance into the land of promise only if they continued to exercise themselves in remembrance of the blood of sprinkling which brought to pass their original liberation from Egypt. They were ever to recognize that, having been delivered by divine power, they were not any more their own. They belonged to God and to the keeping of his laws and instructions to the best of their ability. We know that in this Israel failed, and with the exception of only a few, they all died—not in Egypt, nor yet in Canaan, but in the wilderness that lay between.—Num. 14:20-35

TAKE HEED LEST WE FALL

The fact that we once came under Christ’s blood and were delivered from the bondage of Adamic sin, is no guarantee that we shall finally enter the heavenly Canaan of promise. Concerning the Israelites, Paul said, “With many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” (I Cor. 10:5) We, then, ought to take heed lest we, like them, should be overthrown in the wilderness because of unbelief and disobedience. It is not for

us to presume on God's mercy and to suppose that he will always strive with us and lead and protect us. Indeed, he knows the weakness of our frame, but we cannot suppose that he will forever overlook our lack of faith and obedience. Such presumption on our part is a failure to take God at his word, for continued unbelief and disobedience will debar us from receiving a "crown of life"—Heb. 2:1-3; 3:12; Rev. 2:10

God has promised us the victory, but we must make use of all his provisions whereby we may attain it. Israel failed because when they reached the portals of the promised land, their faith disappeared. They forgot God's continual, gracious provisions for them since they left Egypt, and they forgot his promise of help and overruling in every aspect of their journey. They sent spies into the land to determine whether they would be able to conquer it. Moreover, they believed the exaggerated and false reports of the spies who said that it would be impossible to go in and possess it. For this failure to fully believe God and obey him by following his providential direction, they were turned back, not into Egypt, but into the wilderness where finally they lost their lives.—Num. 13:1-33; 14:26-45; Deut. 1:19-26

Failure on our part, as spiritual Israelites, to take God at his word will, likewise, result in our not attaining to the "mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14) To be rightly exercised by our experiences and recognize God's abounding grace, we must ever keep in mind the fact of our unworthiness. The loving-kindness of our Heavenly Father should cause us to seek his

aid in cleansing ourselves of any “secret faults” which might gradually develop into “presumptuous sins,” possibly making “shipwreck” of our faith.—Ps. 19:12,13; I Tim. 1:18,19

The Israelites felt sure of themselves, so confident that they had a permanent standing before God, that they became careless and indifferent and, finally, presumptuous. Thus they stumbled and fell. The blood could not serve to take them all the way into Canaan except as they would keep in mind the fact that it was only by means of the blood, and by divine power, that they were delivered from Egypt. Forgetting God’s grace, so greatly manifested in these ways, would lead to other deflections and finally to their fall. The lesson for us in this is very well stated by the apostle, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”—I Cor. 10:12

The completion of our salvation needs to be worked out with “fear and trembling,” remembering that God also works in us “to will and to do of his good pleasure.” When we cooperate with what he is doing, we become partners with him in this work, and “lay hold on” that for which he has “laid hold” upon us. (Phil. 2:12,13; 3:10-14, *Diaglott*) It is only as we remain under the blood that we can continue in this cooperative arrangement with God. These lessons, illustrated so impressively by the experiences of Israel, should be taken to heart by the people of God now. All should strive to remain under the influence and the effect of God’s grace, as it is represented in the blood of redemption and deliverance—the blood of Christ, the greater Passover lamb sacrificed for us.

With joy we recall that the whole nation of Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage in the morning following the Passover night. Yet, the slaying of the lamb, and that which was done with its blood, had particularly to do with the tenth plague, which affected the firstborns. They were the only ones in immediate danger of death. However, the blood which caused the firstborns to be saved was also that which brought about the release of all Israel in the morning. What a beautiful picture this portrays! In it, we see Jesus as the greater “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) First, the “church of the first-born” is delivered through the blood. (Heb. 12:23) Then, as associates of Christ in his coming kingdom, they will share in the work of bringing deliverance to all mankind, made possible by the same blood of Christ.—Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:10,11; Col. 1:20

It is for this “manifestation of the sons of God” that the whole creation now awaits, continuing to groan and travail in pain together, but soon to be delivered from the “bondage of corruption.” (Rom. 8:19-22) This month, as Christians throughout the world join together to memorialize the death of our Lord Jesus, let us each renew our dedication and resolve to remain “under the blood.” By so doing, we will not only assure ourselves an “abundant entrance” into the heavenly kingdom, but also help to bring about the end of mankind’s bondage to sin, suffering and death, and an entrance into earthly Canaan, “a good land and a large, ... a land flowing with milk and honey.”—Exod. 3:8 ■