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FREEDOM IS NOT FREE!

- a) “And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ... Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them everyman a lamb... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year... And they shall take the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it...And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the house 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... There was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And [Pharaoh] called 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” [Ex. 12:1,3,5,7,13,30-31]
- b) “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” [Jn 1:29]

On 20 May 2002, East Timor became the first new nation of the 21st Century, when the United Nations handed control over to a democratically elected government. That brought to an end over 480 years of foreign domination, which began with the Portuguese in 1520. From 1975, when Indonesia established brutal control over the territory, over 100,000 people [one-eighth of the population] died in the hands of Indonesian troops. Therefore, as the people hoisted their flag of freedom last week, they knew that it did not come free or cheap. Their freedom had been bought with the blood of their dead patriots.

In like manner, the children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt for 430 years [Ex. 12:40]. No matter the plagues that God had visited on the people of Egypt, Pharaoh refused to let the children of Israel go. Finally, God decided to kill the firstborn of every Egyptian, starting with Pharaoh’s heir [Ex. 12:29]. To do this, He did not ask Moses to use the now famous rod of God, as in the past. Instead, God gave him instructions for the Passover. It involved putting the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. When the Lord saw the blood, He passed by. That way, the children of Israel were saved while the firstborn of the Egyptians died.

What is the spiritual significance of this event and why was it necessary for the deliverance of the children of Israel? What price has God paid to free us from the bondage of sin? These are the issues we shall examine in today’s lesson.

1. Why the Passover?

Last week, I received one of those “forwarded” messages from a member of our Bible Class, which posed the following interesting question, “Could you imagine the price of air if it were brought to you by another supplier [other than God]?” Let us really think about it for a moment. In this era of globalization, we talk a great deal about privatization, that is, letting the private sector buy and run public utilities [such as water, public transport, electricity, etc] as commercial operations. Could you imagine God inviting human suppliers to take over the business? Before you know it, many of us would not be able to buy the air to breathe! Many lungs would pack up in seconds. That is when we would come to appreciate how many free things we enjoy from God that we take for granted and for which we do not show any gratitude.

Moses and Aaron had spent sleepless nights pleading with Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go. Aaron was 83 years old and Moses was 80 [Ex. 7:7], and they were not growing younger! But how did the people they were fighting for see them? On one occasion, as Moses and Aaron were returning from Pharaoh’s, the leaders of the children of Israel blocked their way, “and they said unto them [Moses and Aaron], The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us” [Ex. 5:21]. Therefore, there were a good number of the people in bondage who could not appreciate the high cost of freedom. The only way to give them a sense of it was to get them involved, so to speak. The last plague would involve *all* the children of Israel so that they would come to appreciate what God had done for them.

2. “Let My people go!”

The first nine plagues [see box] involved Moses and Aaron, on one hand, and Pharaoh and his court, on the other hand. The children of Israel heard about them in most cases because Goshen, their part of the country, was shielded away by the power of God [Ex. 8:22; 9:6,26 for example]. Therefore, it could not be said that they were able to appreciate the physical and emotional strains that Moses and Aaron were passing through on their behalf.

THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

- 1) The water of River Nile turned into blood [Ex. 7:14-25]
- 2) Frogs took over the country [Ex. 8:1-15]
- 3) People and animals were infested with lice [Ex. 8:16-19]
- 4) Flies covered Egypt [Ex. 8:20-32]
- 5) Diseases killed the livestock of the Egyptians [Ex. 9:1-7]
- 6) Boils and sores infected Egyptians and their animals [Ex. 9:8-12]
- 7) Hails destroyed crops and vegetation [Ex. 9:13-35]
- 8) Locusts covered the land [Ex. 10:1-20]
- 9) Thick darkness covered Egypt for three days [Ex. 10:21-29]
- 10) The firstborn of Egypt, both man and beast, were killed by the angel of death [Ex. 11:1-12:30]

In ordering the Passover, God gave Moses the following instructions [Ex. 12]:

- a) *“All the congregation of Israel”* would take part [v. 3].
- b) Each household would take a lamb without blemish [i.e., without any defect], “a male of the first year.” Where a household could not afford one, it should share with neighbours [vv.3-5].
- c) The lamb should be killed in the evening, and its blood put on the two side posts and lintels [“upper door posts”] of each house [vv. 6-7].
- d) The people were to eat the flesh of the lamb roasted, at night and in haste, with unleavened bread [i.e., without yeast] and bitter herbs [vv. 8,11].
- e) While eating it hastily, they should have their “loins girded,” with shoes on their feet, “and your staff in your hand” [v. 11].

God further told Moses that “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.*” More importantly, God said, “And this day shall be unto you *for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever*” [vv. 14-15].

Moses called the elders of the people and passed God’s instructions to them [v. 21]. What was their reaction this time? “The children of Israel went away, *and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they*” [v. 28]. They cooperated. As the angel of death swept through the land, “there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead” [v. 30]. Hurriedly, Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, while it was still night, and asked them to take away the people and all their belongings! In fact, “the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste” [vv. 29-33]. God gave the children of Israel favour in the sight of the Egyptians

and they gave them jewels of silver and gold and clothes. They even lent them “such things as they required” [vv. 35-36]! You can be sure such loans were not meant to be paid back!

God gave Moses further instructions concerning the Passover as follows:

- a) Strangers [foreigners as well as paid servants] were not allowed to take part. However, in order to participate, they would have to be circumcised because “one law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you” [vv. 43, 48-49].
- b) The bone of the Passover lamb should not be broken, neither should any part of the meat be left till the following morning [v. 46; Num. 9:12]

It is significant that on the day that the children of Israel were delivered from bondage, “all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt” [Ex. 12: 41]. In other words, they had no more grace to remain in Egypt because all the warring and guardian angels that God had put around them these past 430 years had preceded them towards the Promised Land. When God has delivered us from bondage, He will wait for us in front. Should we refuse to move to where He is waiting for us, we are on our own!

3. Jesus, the Lamb of God, is our Passover!

God commanded Moses that the feast of the Passover should be observed forever [Ex. 12:14]. In the Passover, a lamb without blemish is killed. The meat is eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and the bones must not be broken. During the first Passover, the blood of the lamb was painted on the doorposts of the houses of the children of Israel. As a result, God spared their lives when He killed the firstborn of Egypt. John the Baptist called Jesus Christ “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” [Jn 1:29]. Is there any relationship between the two lambs?

At the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law [i.e., the Law of Moses], or the prophets. *I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil*” [Matt. 5:17]. The risen Christ told His disciples, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, *that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me*” [Lk 24:44]. Therefore, the lamb of the Passover is a figure of the Lamb of God!

Egypt was the world power, which was spiritually anchored on magic and sorcery, as we saw in last week’s lesson [“Magic is no miracle”]. The people of God, the children of Israel, were in bondage under Egypt’s great power for 430 years. In like manner, from the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to the birth of Jesus, Satan held humankind captive for four thousand years! Even in that

garden, God had promised to send the seed of a woman to set us free [**Gen. 3:15**]. Jesus was born without sin, since He is the Son of God without an earthly father [**Lk 1:35**]. Therefore, He had no blemish [[**1 Pet. 1:19**].

Since it took the blood of the lamb to set the children of Israel free from Pharaoh's bondage, it would also take the blood of the Lamb of God to take away our sins and hence set us free from Satan's bondage. How did He do this?

- a) It was on "the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed" [**Lk 22:7**] that He celebrated the Passover with His disciples. At meal, He instituted the Lord's Supper. He took bread, broke it and offered it to His disciples, and said, "Take, eat: this is My body." He also took the cup and said, "Drink ye, all of it; for this is *My blood* of the new testament, *which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" [**Matt. 26: 26-28**]. He then commanded them, "this do in *remembrance of Me*" [**Lk 22:19**]. Christ is our Passover [**1 Cor. 5:7**]. Therefore, each time we conduct the Holy Communion service, we are observing the Passover, which God had commanded the children of Israel to observe forever [**Ex. 12:14-15**]!
- b) The lamb is hastily eaten with unleavened bread [without yeast, which means, not adulterated or polluted] and bitter herbs. Jesus was innocent [**Lk 23: 22**] but He was arrested, tried and crucified in a matter of hours [**Mk 15:1, 25**]! He shed a great deal of blood on the Cross at Calvary. That is why we are told, "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*" [**1 Cor. 5:7-8**].
- c) The bones of the lamb are not to be broken. After the death of Jesus, none of His bones was broken [**Jn 19:33**]!
- d) The redemption of the children of Israel from Pharaoh's bondage was once and for all. From that day, they were set free. In like manner, Jesus, "by His own blood He entered in *once* into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption for us*" [**Heb. 9:12**]. So, we are free!
- e) When God saw the blood of the lamb on the doorposts, He spared the lives of the children of Israel. In like manner, we are "all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" [**Gal. 3:26-27**].
- f) Strangers were allowed to participate in the celebration of the Passover if they were circumcised, which made them like the children of Abraham. In like manner, "there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are *all one in Christ Jesus*. And if ye be Christ's,

then are ye *Abraham's seed, and heirs* according to the promise”
[Gal. 3: 28-29].

4. Lessons

From the forgoing, we should note the following:

- a) Jesus, the Lamb of God and our Passover, has set us free from the bondage of sin, and “if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” [Jn 8:36].
- b) Other than having faith in Him, we are not required to do anything to merit that favour. Consequently, we tend to take our freedom for granted, as if it costs nothing. We were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” [1 Pet. 1:19].
- c) Each time we backslide, we are like the children of Israel who yearned to return to Egypt each time they encountered a trying circumstance [Ex. 14:11-12]. To do so is to behave like a dog that returns to its vomit or a sow that is washed that returns to wallowing in the mire [2 Pet. 2:22].

5. Conclusion

Christianity is the *only religion* that promises salvation by grace, not by works. Some times, believers stretch this grace too far. They think that it gives them the freedom to continue to sin, since they can always repent and be restored [1 Jn 1:9]. However, the freedom that we enjoy is not free. Jesus Christ paid for it with His precious blood. We are to overcome Satan and his demonic forces “by the blood of the Lamb” and by the word of our testimony [Rev. 12:11]. That is why Paul has reminded us, “ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” [1 Cor. 6:20].

We are free but should we behave freely? God forbid!