

REMEMBER CALVARY

Exodus 12:1-14

12 Jehovah spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ²“This month is to be for you the first month, it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Speak to the whole congregation of Israel and tell them, On the tenth day of this month every man is to take a lamb* for his family, one for each household. ⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb,* then he and his neighbor who lives next to him are to share one lamb, taking into account the number of persons in the two households. You are to divide the lamb according to what each person can eat. ⁵Your animal must be a year-old male without defect; you may choose it from the sheep or the goats. ⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to slaughter their animals at twilight. ⁷They are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and top of the doorframes of the houses in which they will eat the lambs. ⁸That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire; they are to eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roast it over the fire—roast its head and its legs together with its entrails. ¹⁰You must not let any of it remain until the morning; but if some is left until the morning, you must burn it in the fire. ¹¹This is how you are to eat it: With your cloak tucked into your belt, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You must eat it in haste—it is Jehovah’s Passover—¹²because I will go through the land of Egypt in that night and strike down every first born—both man and beast—and I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. I am Jehovah. ¹³The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are residing; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague shall come upon you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. ¹⁴You are to commemorate this day; you are to celebrate it as a festival to Jehovah. By a divine ordinance, you are to celebrate this day as a festival to Jehovah throughout your generations.”

*The Hebrew word can mean either “lamb” or “kid”

EXODUS 13:3-10

13 ³Moses said to the people, “Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, because Jehovah brought you out of this place by the strength of his hand. In commemorating this day, no leavened bread shall be eaten. ⁴Today, in the month Abib, you go forth. ⁵When Jehovah brings you into the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Hivite and the Jebusite—the land he swore to your forefathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey—you are to observe this rite in this month: ⁶For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day a festival shall be held for Jehovah. ⁷Throughout the seven days only unleavened bread shall be eaten; no leavened bread must even be seen among you, neither may any leaven be seen among you anywhere within your borders. ⁸On that day you shall tell your son, I do this because of what Jehovah did for me when I came out of Egypt. ⁹This rite will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your

forehead that the law of Jehovah must be on your lips; for with a mighty hand Jehovah brought you out of Egypt. ¹⁰Therefore, you shall observe this rite at the appointed time from year to year."

Introduction

One Easter the congregation of a small rural church decided to give a special Passion Presentation. Everyone took part: some sang the favorite hymns of Easter, others read portions of the Scriptures, and still others wrote special poems for the occasion. One young man made a cross: with a hatchet he spliced apart some pieces of a log, bound them together with a strand of cord, and inserted this rough-hewn cross into a slot he had hollowed out in the remainder of the log which served as a stand.

After the Passion Presentation had been given and the Easter season was over, the pastor decided to make that simple, rough-hewn cross a permanent fixture in the church. He prominently displayed it on the center of the communion table at the front of the sanctuary.

Some months later the pastor happened to notice that the cross was gone; someone had removed it from its position on the communion table. When he inquired as to what had become of the cross, he was informed that the cleaning lady had removed it because she didn't think it looked good enough to be prominently displayed in the front of the sanctuary—it was too crude and rough-hewn.

What happened to that little wooden cross in that little rural church can also happen to the doctrine of the cross in some congregations: it no longer has a place in their religion or in their life. But for our sake and for His glory, the LORD would have us to ever remember the cross of Calvary and the great sacrifice of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament counterpart to Calvary was the Passover. As the LORD gives instructions for the observance of the Passover night in Egypt, He emphasizes the importance of commemorating that night throughout the future generations of Israel's history. As Old Testament Israel was to perpetually remember the Passover, so we are to remember Calvary, because of the great salvation accomplished there by Christ the Savior.

I. Remember Calvary, Because of the Awful Price of Sin

In the 11th chapter of Exodus, at the LORD's command, Moses announces the tenth and final plague the LORD will execute against Egypt, the death of all the first born:

So Moses said, "This is what Jehovah says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. ⁵Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh,

who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. ⁶There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. (Ex.11:4-6)

This was actually the first plague the LORD declared He would enact against Egypt: *“You shall say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what Jehovah says: Israel is my son, my first born, ²³and I have told you, Let my son go, so that he may serve me, but you have refused to let him go. Listen. I will kill your son, your first born”* (Ex. 4:22-23.) But it is the last plague the LORD does in fact execute against the rebellious nation of Egypt.

Throughout this encounter between Moses (representing God) and Pharaoh, the LORD again and again seeks to turn Pharaoh from his stubborn rebellion, to induce him to repent, to spare him from the ultimate consequence of his sin. The LORD employs a vast array of measures: He sought to move Pharaoh by afflictions and by promises, by mercy and by judgments. But when Pharaoh spurns every overture and persists in hardening himself against the LORD, the LORD finally gives him over to the ultimate consequence of sin. That which the LORD threatened and forewarned, He did in fact finally execute:

At midnight Jehovah struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. ³⁰Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. (Ex. 12:29-30)

Along these same lines, note 2 Chronicles 36:15-17, a passage that relates the LORD’s dealings with the people of Israel at a later date in their history:

Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had compassion for his people and for his dwelling place. ¹⁶But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of Jehovah was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. ¹⁷He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. (2 Chron.36:15-17)

Note, too, Proverbs 1:24-28, a passage in which the wisdom of the LORD (perhaps a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ (?)) declares,

Because you refused to listen when I called—I stretched out my hand, but no one paid attention; ²⁵you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke. ²⁶Therefore, I will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when what you

dread overtakes you; ²⁷when what you dread overtakes you like a storm and your calamity sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish overwhelm you. ²⁸Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. (Prov. 1:24-28)

The Lord Jesus who presently extends the invitation, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”* (Matt. 11:28,) shall on the last day say to all those who have rejected Him and the witness of His Father, *“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41b.) At Calvary we witness the awful price of sin, that which the unrepentant sinner will finally experience.

Consider not only what sin finally costs the unrepentant sinner, but also what it cost God to redeem His people:

Speak to the whole congregation of Israel and tell them, On the tenth day of this month every man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ...⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to slaughter [their animals] at twilight. ...⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roast it over the fire—roast its head and its legs together with its entrails. (Ex.12:3,6,9)

The lamb was to be selected on the tenth day of the month and slain on the fourteenth day— perhaps to a lot time for its intestines to be emptied of stool? Then, on the fourteenth day of the month the lamb was slain, its blood poured out, and its body roasted over the fire—for the salvation of God’s people. When we consider the fate that the Egyptian Empire finally suffered, and the means of redemption provided by the LORD for His people in the form of the Passover sacrifice, we are confronted with the awful price of sin; the price that shall be personally paid by the unrepentant sinner, and the price that was paid by the Savior on behalf of all those who trust in Him. The hymn writer Thomas Kelly expresses it well when he writes:

You who think of sin but lightly,
nor suppose the evil great,
Here [at the cross of Calvary] may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the Sacrifice appointed;
see who bears the awful load;
It is the Word, the LORD’s Anointed,
Son of Man and Son of God.

Just as Old Testament Israel was commanded to perpetually commemorate the night of their deliverance by means of the annual Passover, so must we as New Testament Christians must ever remember Calvary, because of the awful price of

sin: the price that shall be personally paid by the unrepentant sinner, and the price that was paid by the Savior on behalf of all those who trust in Him

II. Remember Calvary, Because It is the Only Provision for Salvation

Exodus 12:1 emphasizes that the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron *"in Egypt,"* (giving them instructions for the observance of the Passover Sacrifice.) Note that the LORD comes to His people while they are still in their bondage and He provides the means of their salvation. In this light consider such New Testament passages as Romans 5:8 (*"God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*) and Luke 19:10 (*"the Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost."*) We must not seek to make our own provision for our salvation, we must look to Christ and trust in Him as the divine Savior provided for us.

The LORD declares, *"This month is to be for you the first month, it shall be the first month of the year for you"* (12:2.) What the LORD is providing is a new beginning, a new life, and a whole new order of things. Here we should take into consideration such New Testament passages as 2 Corinthians 5:17 (*"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have passed away, they have become new"*) and 2 Peter 3:13, (*"according to his promise, we are watching for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness resides."*) This is God's provision for us and for our salvation: to make you a new creation, and give us an inheritance in a new creation.

What the LORD required was the selection and the sacrifice of a lamb: a lamb *"without defect"* (12:5, a spotless lamb. Ultimately, the LORD Himself provides that "lamb" in the person of His own Son, Jesus Christ: *"When he* (John the Baptist) *saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, there is the Lamb of God!'"* (Jn.1:36). What is absolutely necessary in order for us to be spared from the judgment of hell is a sinless substitute to take God's righteous judgment upon Himself, and that Substitute is Jesus: *"Christ ... died for sins once for all, the Righteous One for the unrighteous ones, so that he might bring us to God"* (1 Pet. 3:18a.)

Furthermore, the LORD required personal identification with that substitute; translated into New Testament terms, what is required is personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Exodus 12:7, the lamb's blood must be applied to the doorpost of each individual Israelite home, and to be spared from the judgment, each individual Israelite must stay in the house covered with the blood of the lamb:

Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning. ²³When Jehovah goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the

doorframe and will pass over the doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down. (Ex.12:22-23)

Furthermore, according to Exodus 12:8, each of the Israelites had to eat the roasted flesh of the lamb, receiving life and nourishment from the sacrificial lamb. For our salvation God requires us to have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ: we must entrust our lives into His hands (just as you entrust your money to the bank,) and receive Him as our Savior and Lord: *“to all who did receive him, to those who believe on his name, to them he gave the right to become children of God”* (John 1:12.)

The LORD required that His people eat the sacrificial lamb garbed in travelers’ dress: their coats on and their walking staff in hand (12:11.) The LORD was leading His people out of Egypt into a new life in His kingdom as His redeemed people. Our relationship with Christ means we now have a new and different relationship to the world: we no longer belong to the world, we are now on a spiritual journey to the kingdom of heaven.

Just as Old Testament Israel was commanded to perpetually commemorate the night of their deliverance by means of the annual Passover, so must we as New Testament Christians must ever remember Calvary, because it is the only provision for your salvation. Just as the LORD instructed Old Testament Israel to apply the blood of the sacrificial lamb to their doorways and stay in the house, so the LORD instructs us to come to Christ—putting our trust in Him—and follow Him, as He alone is able to deliver us from hell and bring us into the kingdom of God: *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved”* (Acts 4:12.)

III. Remember Calvary, and Never Lose Sight of It

The Passover was to be remembered as a yearly memorial, a perpetual reminder of the LORD’s great work of salvation. The children of Israel are commanded to *“commemorate this day”* (Ex. 13:3.) In the same way must we as Christians ever remember Calvary.

When you feel forsaken by men, or by God, ...remember Calvary. A man in Dundee, Scotland, who had fallen and broken his back, was confined to his bed for 40 years. He never had a day without pain, but God gave him the grace and strength to keep going. His cheery disposition and great love for the LORD inspired all who visited him. One day a friend asked, “Doesn’t the devil ever tempt you to doubt God?” “Oh, yes, he tries—especially when I have to lie here and see my old schoolmates driving by, having a good time with their families. At times it’s as if Satan whispers, ‘If the LORD is so good, why does He keep you here? Why did He allow you to break your back?’” When the friend asked how he handled such attacks, the man replied, “I point him to Calvary and the wounds of my Savior and say, ‘Doesn’t He love me!’ The devil can’t answer that, so he flees

every time.” (*Our Daily Bread*, 12/2/92) In John 15:13-14, the Lord Jesus Himself assures us, *“No one has any greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends.”*

When you feel the guilt of your sin, ...remember Calvary:

... if anyone sins, we have someone who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 2:1b-2a;) literally, “he is the propitiation for our sins” (i.e., the sacrifice which satisfies the divine justice and appeases the divine wrath of God.)

When you encounter the lure of temptation, ...remember Calvary:

I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ living in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature along with its passions and lusts. (Gal. 5:24)

When you are confronted with an “insolvable” dilemma, ...remember Calvary:

God presented Christ Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement ... ²⁶he did it to demonstrate his justice ... so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:25-26) Calvary demonstrates that even the dilemma of how a just and holy God can forgive sin and still not violate His justice is not an insolvable problem for God—Calvary proves that nothing is too hard for the LORD!

When you find yourself being swept along by the current of the world (the outlook, the attitude, the busyness of the world), ...remember Calvary:

... far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by means of which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. (Gal. 6:14)

When you encounter the seduction of false teachers, ...remember Calvary:

I delivered to you as of first importance that which I also received, namely, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; ⁴and that he was buried; and that he has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

Just as Old Testament Israel was commanded to perpetually commemorate the night of their deliverance by means of the annual Passover, so must we as New

Testament Christians must ever remember Calvary, ...and never lose sight of it.
Remember Calvary throughout all of your life and in the hour of your death:

Hold Your cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.
(Henry F. Lyte)

Conclusion

For our sake, and for His glory, the LORD would have us to ever remember Calvary, because of the great salvation accomplished there by Christ the Savior.