

Passover and Judgment

(English Standard Version throughout, except where noted)

Because of all the confusion that exists in the world, it seems as though Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are coming! I'm sure that a number of you have been aware of the documentary that the *Discovery Channel* showed recently entitled, *The Jesus Family Tomb*. It was about the "great discovery" of a tomb in Jerusalem in 1980.

It was re-discovered in 1996 by an intrepid producer who then produced a film for the BBC. That aired at Easter in 1996, and then disappeared from the radar altogether. It went down somewhat like a "lead balloon." The academics in the UK said, "*Ho hum. Okay. Fine. Goodbye.*" It disappeared until a Canadian got hold of it again and produced a documentary for the *Discovery Channel*. It's about to disappear, fortunately, before Passover!

I was able to undertake a couple of interviews with people who were involved with the original archaeology: one of whom was the junior archaeologist on the scene. In discussing with him, he made a comment which was quite germane to the whole thing. He said, "*If there had been any sign amongst any of the bones recovered from the tomb that a person had been subjected to crucifixion, they would have been jumped upon with great delight.*" (I am adding artistic licence to his words.)

They have the remains of ONLY ONE person who shows signs of having been crucified. In one tomb, they found a person who had a nail and part of the tree on which he had been crucified still attached to his wrist. Most people who were crucified weren't dignified with a burial! Oftentimes their bodies were left to the wild animals and the birds. If they were given a burial, like most people in Israel at that period of time, they were not placed in tombs. They were placed into a trench and covered.

Some interesting material has come up on the aspect of burial - confirmation in fact, in many ways of the Scriptures. I know one aspect that has oftentimes created great problems for Biblical scholars and that is the INCREDIBLE amount of perfume and spices that Nicodemus bought. This archaeologist said that they put perfume in the tombs because a body was left there, simply wrapped in two pieces of cloth: a piece of cloth around the body and a separate piece of cloth around the head. This tells us that the *Shroud of Turin* did NOT come from Palestine - because that was never the way they wrapped dead bodies at that time! People were wrapped in two separate pieces.

Sometimes people who were in a coma were buried! This way they could blow the piece of cloth off their face and call for help!

The spices were put in the tomb to lessen the aroma, the smell from the decaying body. Romans and Greeks used to cover the bodies in soil. The Jews didn't. So despite the confusion that people try to bring into the Bible and into the study of Jesus Christ, we can still learn from some of the experiences, some of the understanding that has come along - which otherwise we would probably never learn about. All things work together for good in one way or another!

I would also make a comment about the Feast of Tabernacles. Someone reminded me today about an event that is occurring in San Diego. In your preparations for the Feast at Del Mar, you may wish to make a note that there will be an exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls in San Diego at that period of time! This will be an opportunity to see scrolls that existed at the time of Jesus Christ! You will be able to see something which is more than 2,000 years old!

You will be able to see how people wrote at the time of Jesus Christ! You will be able to see the Scriptures from which Jesus Christ read (not the exact scroll). But you will be able to see how they looked. You will see that when Jesus Christ was given the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth, and He got

up to read, He was a whole lot smarter than us - because we can't read it! Even if we knew Hebrew, we still probably wouldn't be able to read it!

I am sure it will be an interesting and useful exhibition to look at. We will talk about that later as that period of time comes along.

As has been mentioned, we are rapidly approaching the Passover and the Holy Day season. Passover is interesting from many aspects, but from one particular aspect, because this is a service of the Church of God in which children have no part. They come to services. Depending on their age, they listen to the sermonette. They listen to the sermon. They listen to the announcements. They undoubtedly take part in the singing of the hymns and are able to say, "Amen," to the opening and closing prayer. They go to weddings. They can go to funerals. They can even go to baptisms. They can come to Bible Studies.

They are involved in all aspects of the Church's life. They look forward to the Holy Days because of the food - just like the "cookie socials" of the last Sabbath of the month. But they don't take part in the Passover Service.

It's easy for a child, and for us, to think that there is nothing in it for them. But if we see it, there is! They can still be prepared. Their minds can be sharpened for the future - despite the fact that they have no part in the Passover!

The fact that they don't come to the Passover Service does not mean to say that any child needs to be ignorant of what happens at the Passover Service! Obviously, it depends upon the age of the child. A child needs to be able understand, within its own context and within its own age, what happens at the Passover. As they grow in understanding, they can come to understand what is read at the Passover.

When all is said and done, there is nothing unusual for a child in washing feet! It's a "given" as far as a child is concerned. He has to wash his feet sometime! Eating bread, be it Matzos or other unleavened bread is not unusual for a child. Drinking wine is probably not unusual for a child either! Reading Scriptures is not unusual for a child. So there is nothing that happens at the Passover Services that is strange, or that needs to be kept from a child. It's just that they don't have a place there.

On the other hand, at the Jewish Passover, which is not kept on the 14th Nisan (and which is not really the Passover at all, but is really the commemoration of the Night to be Much Remembered), a child has a great place. In fact, the Jews have a part in the conducting of the *Seder* meal in which the youngest child in the room is normally given the opportunity to ask four questions about it.

In so doing, the Jews hope to address an instruction that the Eternal gave to us in Exodus 13. The Children of Israel had kept the Passover. They had been able to take the riches of the Egyptians and literally start the exodus. The Eternal provides them with some instruction, recapping what has happened for them so that they can put it in context. He says:

Exodus 13:9 (Tanakh) This shall serve you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead in order that the teaching of the Eternal may be in your mouth, for with a mighty hand the Eternal freed you from Egypt.

Moses, giving the Eternal's instruction here is reiterating what we so often read in Deuteronomy 6 about how these things have got to be bound on our hands and on our forehead. He said:

***10 You shall keep this institution at its set time from year,
11 and when the Eternal has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and has given it to you,
12 you shall set apart from the Eternal every first issue of the womb; every male firstling that your cattle drop shall be the Eternal's
13 Every firstling ass you will redeem with a sheep. If you don't redeem it, you will break its neck, and you must redeem every firstborn male among your children.
14 And when in time to come your sons asks you saying, "What does this mean?" you shall***

say to him that it was with a mighty hand that the Eternal brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage.

Children were supposed to ask questions about the Passover and about the exodus! The Eternal intended them to understand the lessons that were to be learned from it. So the Eternal instructs Moses, and Moses instructs the Children of Israel.

15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Eternal slew every firstborn in the land of Egypt, the firstborn of both man and beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Eternal every first male issue of the womb, but redeem every firstborn among my sons.

16 It shall be a sign upon your hand, and as a symbol on your forehead, that with a mighty hand the Eternal freed us from Egypt.

This was supposed to be part of the memory of the people, just as it is supposed to be part of our memory. It is a memory which is to be conveyed from one generation to the next, and never lost. Obviously, there are many facets to the lessons.

For a start, let's consider the children of Israel in Egypt. Children become very aware of the circumstances of their parents. They understand if they don't have something that the neighbours have. They often come to appreciate if they have something that the neighbours don't have. They understand those differences.

They understand the circumstances under which parents live. If the father is coming home from work every night complaining about work, what image does a child form of the place of his father's work, of his father's employer? It may even shape his whole attitude to work!

Obviously, if parents have negative attitudes towards various facets of life, the child very quickly learns those same negative attitudes. The children of Israel in Egypt would have been aware of the tyranny under which their parents lived. They would have been very much aware of that.

They would have been aware of the way in which the cry of the descendants of Israel were uttered and heard by the Eternal. They would have learned the same prejudices against the Egyptians. They would have learned the bad traits of the parents towards the Egyptians, rather than godly traits.

For that generation, the defeat of the Egyptians would have been savoured and appreciated. The Children of Israel took with them much of that memory.

Do we, in our day, appreciate what God has done for us in allowing US to keep the Passover? What was it that the Children of Israel saw in that Passover? It was the defeat of the Egyptians. All of the things that they detested were wiped out, gone - for a moment! They were rich - for a moment! Circumstances changed - for a moment!

When we think of the Passover, what do we see as being changed in our lives? What do we appreciate that God has done in terms of the Passover and our lives? Are we able to convey that to our children? Are we able to do that more effectively than the Children of Israel in Egypt?

In Exodus 12, the Eternal instructed Moses. He said:

Exodus 12:12 (English Standard Version) For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments ...

"On all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgment!" It's an interesting study. The Israelites hated the Egyptians, but if we were able to turn the clock back, I think we could say with a great degree of certainty that the Israelites didn't hate what they thought made the Egyptians great! They hated the Egyptians, but they didn't hate what they THOUGHT made the Egyptians great! Consider that.

How did the Eternal look at it? The Eternal didn't hate the Egyptians! They are going to be resurrected one day and they are going to have physical life again - and they are going to learn to live God's way of life. God didn't hate the Egyptians. God rather hated what THEY thought made them great.

People have done studies on the gods of Egypt from time to time, and tried to equate the plagues with the various gods of Egypt. The firstborn was one of the gods of Egypt: the "god-king."

But God didn't hate the Egyptians. He hated what the Egyptians themselves thought made them great.

Sadly for Israel, Israel never learned that lesson. They never really came to see it from God's perspective because they were so hooked, so committed to what they thought made the Egyptians great. They missed the whole lesson! The Eternal said: "*Remember this. Remember that I killed the firstborn of Egypt so that YOU could be free - and I did that as part of bringing judgment upon all the gods of Egypt.*"

Everything that the Egyptians considered to be their gods were being judged in the Passover. Do we appreciate that?

If we translate their Passover into our scenario in the 21st century, what do we find? How would you relate the river of Egypt, which was the lifeblood of Egypt to our current world? What would be the lifeblood for us today? Maybe it's the banking system or the Internet. What provides life to the Western world today?

We can try to make the connection between the frogs, the lice, the flies, darkness and all the rest of it. I guess the easiest way of looking at it is individually, to ask ourselves, "*Just as these things ruled the life of the Egyptians, what rules our lives?*"

Clearly, in the West, it would be materialism! In other parts of the world, the rain, the seasons are still seen in many ways as part of the "magical" aspects of life - very much like the Egyptians.

The purpose of the Passover is multi-faceted. It's like a gem. It has MULTIPLE facets to it - all to show the glory of our Creator!

We talk of the Passover in terms of the payments of sins.

We talk of the Passover in terms of our involvement in God's plan and being able to come out of sins, to live that life and to look forward to the Holy Spirit.

But what Moses recorded in Exodus 12 has a relationship to the Passover as well, because judgment plays a part in the Passover. Do we appreciate that?

Let's come to the New Testament and to Jesus Christ.

John 12:1 Six days before the Passover ...

It is startling to consider that this is within a week of the Passover, and we are only in chapter 12 out of 21 chapters! It's a startling thing, when you stop and look at the gospels, and start to analyse where each of the gospel writers provided a focus! Forty percent of John's gospel is focused literally on the last six days of Jesus Christ's life! Then we have a brief insight into those 40 days He spent with the disciples thereafter. The majority of John's gospel is focused on Jesus Christ's last six days.

1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

... as recorded in the previous chapter.

2 So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table.

Mary provided some very special ointment which Judas got "carried away" about.

Supper would have been, at best, very late on the sixth day, or early on the fifth day, depending on whether it was before sunset or after. The supper would have occurred in what would have been the equivalent of our daylight part of Friday or Friday evening.

The next day after the supper was the Sabbath. It is now four days before the Passover.

12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

He rides into Jerusalem.

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

27 "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.

31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

Here is a fairly dense piece of instruction from Jesus Christ here. Most people read over it without great appreciation. If my understanding is correct, this would appear to be given on the Sabbath - which would have been the tenth day of the month.

What happened on the tenth day of the first month? The lamb had to be chosen. The lamb had to be chosen, to be sacrificed at the beginning of the 14th day so that judgment could be avoided by those who took the blood from that lamb and put it on their doorposts and lintel, those who stood within that home and ate the flesh of that lamb.

Rather interestingly, the children in each family would undoubtedly have had a part in choosing the lamb. They may well also have had a part in daubing the blood on the doorposts! They may well also have had a part in preparing the fire so the lamb could be roast. They certainly had a part in eating it and enjoying it. They were very much involved in it.

They did that so that the firstborn in their house did not need to die. The firstborn in their house did not need to die - because THEY were not under judgment. In the rest of the houses of Egypt, the firstborn died because they WERE under judgment.

As I understand John's gospel, Jesus Christ is in the Temple on the 10th day of the first month - when people would have been there, choosing their lambs for Passover. Jesus Christ said, *"For this point came I to this hour. This is the point of what it has all been about - being chosen to be the Passover Lamb for humanity!"*

And the consequence of Him being chosen as the Passover Lamb was that JUDGMENT is now upon this world. Just as judgment was part and parcel of the Passover in Egypt, so it remains to this day! As it was in the time of Christ, so it is for you and me. We have the responsibility of understanding that. Jesus Christ carried on from that point and said:

31 ... now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

He was obviously acceptable to His Father.

28 ... a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

He was acceptable to His Father! He was the appropriate Sacrifice. He was able to BE the sacrifice.

Christ's choosing, and Christ's death was also a matter of judgment just as the choosing of the lamb in Egypt and the sacrificing of that lamb in Egypt was part of judgment. It was a means by which people could avoid judgment, and the destruction of judgment.

The judgment on the gods of Egypt was a type of the judging of the Prince of this world!

In John 10, Jesus Christ is not addressing ten physical gods who were being judged. On this occasion He is talking about the one god of this world.

Paul said to the Ephesians:

***Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins
2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air ...***

John talks about how the ruler of this world, the Prince of this world is cast out. Paul talks about the Prince of the power of the air ...

***2 ... the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience--
3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,
5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--
6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,***

Let me read the first couple of verses from the *Net Bible*, a modern translation:

***Ephesians 2:1 And although you were dead in your transgressions and sins,
2 in which you formerly lived according to this world's present path, according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience,
3 among whom all of us also formerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind ...***

... just like Egypt! All of the gods of Egypt were wrapped up around their physical lives: the cravings of their flesh and of their desires. That's what God was bringing judgment upon.

We have been freed from that tyranny. We have the opportunity to live free from that tyranny. The choosing of Jesus Christ and His death sounded the death knell for the god of this world just as surely as the death of the lamb spelled death to the power of the remaining gods of Egypt.

Did those gods lose their power immediately? Things toppled for a period of time in Egypt. But within seven days they were able to regroup, to pursue the Israelites with the motive of re-enslaving them.

The god of this world's judgment has come, as John says. He WILL be cast out. It is future indicative. He is judged. He will be cast out.

The Passover does not speak to the REMOVAL of the god of this world. We await another seven months for that - to the tenth day of the seventh month. Seven months from now we will remember and understand that.

Although judgment came upon these gods, although judgment has come upon the god of this world, it does not mean that he does not have power any longer. In reality, what the Israelites saw as the gods of Egypt were not the real "god" at all. They were just manifestations of the confusion that that god loves to create! Satan was, ultimately speaking, the "god of Egypt."

God was showing His power over Satan and the manifestations that Satan liked to use to keep the Egyptians under his control and in check. Satan has yet to lose his power, but the day is coming when that will happen!

Let's read some of the Scriptures that we read at the Passover and put them into context within this. As Jesus Christ and His disciples sat around the table, He said:

John 14:30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me,

"He may be able to take My life. He may be able to put Me on a stake and remove My physical life from Me. But My Father has the power to resurrect Me and to give Me life again!"

As children, we used to have a little adage: *"Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me."* But of course, they did!

But ultimately speaking, life is what you make out of it. You may have all sorts of disabilities in life, but you don't have to allow those to control your life!

Jesus Christ was not going to be controlled by Satan. He may have the power to remove His physical life, but the means existed whereby He was going to be resurrected. So Satan had no claim on Him.

He also had no claim on Jesus Christ because he had never enslaved Him. He was free from sin. He had never been in bondage to Satan.

Jesus Christ talked about how He was coming - obviously with great anger.

In John 16, having talked about how profitable it was for Him to go away, and how, when He went away, He would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ made this comment:

John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send (it) to you.

8 And when (it) comes, (it) will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;

10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;

Notice the next verse:

11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Satan, just like the gods of Egypt, stands judged by the Passover! He stands condemned in a very powerful manner. John 14:30 and John 16:11 speak of the Ruler of the world and his judgment.

Israel, coming out of Egypt, still allowed the mentality of Egypt to influence them. They got to Mount Sinai. Moses went up the mountain. When Moses didn't come back, the first thing they said was, "*Make us gods like the Egyptians had!*" So they made a golden calf and worshipped it.

The mentality of Egypt was still part and parcel of their thinking! It still influenced them. As I said earlier, they hated the Egyptians but they loved what they thought made them great. The gods of Egypt were part of what made them great. The wealth of the Egyptians made them great.

In the book of Corinthians, Paul speaks to this very same thing. People, from time to time, try to see Paul as doing something different from the rest of the Bible. The idea that in fact, "*Paul started Christianity*" is not a new idea. It has been raised and propagated, espoused and believed by people from time to time.

It has been refuted by others. It's one of those things, like a bad penny that just keeps on popping up again. At the present time, one particular individual I know thinks that he ought to teach the world that Paul actually founded Christianity, that Jesus Christ didn't found Christianity at all! "*Paul was the bad guy. He is responsible for all of the problems of this world. Blame Paul!*"

One of the reasons that they like to blame Paul is that they think that Paul did not have any connection to the Scriptures! The other day I came upon a website in which the author was involved in building a bibliography of all of the articles and books that have been published showing how Paul used the Old Testament. At the present time they have something like 355 books and articles in their bibliography. It would take a little while to read some of them.

But very clearly, Paul, as a servant of Jesus Christ, was very deeply GROUNDED in the Old Testament! I think at times we fail to appreciate just HOW deeply grounded he was in the Old Testament. When he talks about things, we oftentimes think that Paul is saying something new. But no, he is not! He is providing lessons that were there within God's Word since time immemorial. They were written by Moses some 1500 years before Paul ever saw the light of day as Saul.

***1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,
24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.
28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.
30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.
31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.
32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.***

As we see in verse 28, we are instructed to examine ourselves. None of us, as individuals, are "worthy" individuals - just as ancient Israel were not a worthy nation to be called by God. They were slaves. Who calls slaves? Who wants to make a family out of slaves?

If you are going to choose a family for yourself, what would you choose? You would choose someone who has "made it," someone who has got a nice, comfortable lifestyle, or someone who knows how to take care of a nice, comfortable lifestyle, someone who has some "class" to them, someone who has a little bit of taste, someone who has a little bit of quality: the sort of person you would like to marry!

But who did Jesus Christ call? Who is Jesus Christ going to marry? He is going to marry the "weak" of this world! In calling the nation of Israel in Egypt, He called the weak. He calls the weak in calling us. We are not WORTHY of the calling we have. As Paul says in Ephesians 2, it is by grace that we are saved! There is no question of that whatsoever.

But being unworthy of the calling that we might have does not mean to say we need to conduct ourselves in an unworthy way in terms of the Passover, and in terms of the preparation for the Passover.

What is the purpose of examining ourselves as Paul mentions in verse 28? It is to see what system we are under and a part of. Have we really learned the lesson of the Children of Israel in Egypt? Are we just like the Israelites where we HATE those who oppress us, but LOVE what gives them their power?

Or do we really see WHY the rest of the world oppresses people? Do we really understand what is behind it? Are we taking the Passover because we don't WANT to be part of that system any more? Is it that we don't want to be ruled (as the apostle Paul said to the Ephesians), living out our lives and the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and mind because of the god of this world? We don't want to have a part in that any more! We want to be different!

Do we see this as the world we want, or do we want the world that God has? Are we truly, as the apostle Paul says, "of Christ"? Do we have God's priorities? Is it godly priorities that rule and motivate our lives? Do we see what God wants to use to make us great? Do we see that?

As Paul says in verse 31, if we examine ourselves, if we judge ourselves, we would not be judged! Hmmm! Because Passover IS about judgment! The responsibility is that we judge ourselves in preparation for the Passover - so that we can avoid judgment.

The form of judgment that Paul talks about in these verses is not the final judgment. Rather, it is correction from God. If we fail to judge ourselves properly and completely, we are not going to be thrown into the Lake of Fire necessarily. But God is doing to do what is necessary to wake us up to the fact that we DO need to judge ourselves.

The firstborn in Egypt were not lost eternally because of the death angel that passed over that night. They are going to have the opportunity of living again, and of learning God's way of life.

But as Paul says, if we don't judge ourselves, if we don't learn the lesson of Passover and apply that lesson of Passover to ourselves, God is going to have to correct us. We are going to have to suffer correction.

Paul's words held for the Corinthians and for us, just as they held for the Egyptians. If the Israelites in Egypt hadn't judged themselves they would have been judged. Sometimes this idea of judging ourselves may be a bit strange. *"How do I judge myself?"*

Let's look at it this way. How did the Children of Israel in Egypt judge themselves prior to the Passover? For a start, they had to take a lamb on the tenth day of the first month. They had to separate it from the herd.

And right at the end of the 13th day, at the beginning of the 14th day, they had to take that little lamb and slit its throat, take the blood and put it on the doorposts. Having done that, they would then have skinned the lamb and put it on a spit, and roasted and eaten it. What is more, they had to stay indoors all night. They weren't allowed to go out until the morning.

Imagine if they had failed in any of those points, if an Israelite had said, *"Give over! I'm not giving one of my lambs so that you lot can have a free meal!"*

Sometimes people think that these people had a lot of stuff to eat. If I can digress for a moment, the question is raised: *"What gives with the Israelites in the wilderness claiming they have got nothing to eat. They've got all these sheep and cattle! They've got plenty to eat."*

No, they didn't! They may have had plenty of sheep, cattle and goats, but these animals weren't kept to eat. They were kept for their milk, which produced butter and cheese. The sheep and the goats produced wool and hair. When the cattle eventually got too old to produce young, they would be slaughtered, and the hide used for leather.

To eat your livestock was like eating your capital! Any business advisor will tell you that you don't eat your capital! It's productive capital. So what if an Israelite had said, *"I'm not going to let you eat one of my prize lambs! Look at that lamb, a first year lamb: that is going to give me 'x' number of lambs over the next five years or so. You're not having that."*

What would have happened to that family? They would have been judged. There would have been one firstborn dead in that family. Or if a person said, *"I am not besmirching my house by putting blood on the doorposts,"* what would have happened to that family?

In other words, Israel judged themselves by making sure that their actions were in harmony with the Eternal's instructions.

It's not some great difficult thing to judge ourselves:

- "Is my life in harmony with the Eternal's instructions?"
- "Do I live my life in the way in which the Eternal has instructed?"

If we don't live our lives in harmony with the Eternal's instructions, we will be judged. We will be judged just as surely as an ancient Israelite in Egypt would have been judged - like the Egyptians - if they had not followed the instructions of God. They, likewise, would have lost a firstborn.

So when Paul says that we are to judge ourselves lest we be judged, he is saying, *"Look at what you've been taught. How does your life measure up to what you have been instructed?"*

I am the first to realise that our life is a lot more than selecting a lamb on the tenth day and killing it at the beginning of the 14th day, and putting the blood on the doorposts, and cooking and roasting it by fire and staying in that night. Our lives are not reduced to just half a dozen simple things! It's the entirety of our lives that we need to consider.

- How do we treat one another?
- How do we conduct our lives towards one another and towards God?

Obedience is much more encompassing. As Moses told the Children of Israel in the book of Deuteronomy, "You are to instruct these things to your children when you rise up, when you sit down, when you lie down, and when you walk in the way." It's all encompassing. Our judgment encompasses the entirety of our lives. For each and every one of us we have to look and say, *"What part of our lives are we keeping to ourselves as opposed to allowing it to be ruled by God?"*

Judging ourselves is not some esoteric concept that we have to wrestle with. Ultimately speaking, judging ourselves can be reduced to something that even a child can understand. I think it also helps put into context the comment that the apostle Peter said:

1 Peter 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Once again, the apostle Peter links the aspect of judgment to obedience to the gospel, the good news of God: the fact that this world IS going to be ruled by God, the fact that the Passover is kept because Jesus Christ IS qualified to be the Ruler of this world. He has qualified to replace Satan as the ruler of this world.

And in so doing, not only has He qualified for Himself, but He is able to remove our sins so that we can be made clean, and we can have a relationship with the Father, that we can then become receptacles for God's Holy Spirit to dwell in, and that we can develop the very mind of Christ.

The apostle Paul talks to the Corinthians about being Christ-like. So we have this aspect of judgment very much tied into the Passover.

2 Corinthians 13:5 (King James Version) Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves ...

What is it that motivates my life? Is it obedience to God?

5 ... Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Do we see Jesus Christ's life being lived in us? Do we see His character being created within us? We should be able to see that.

Many have seen obedience to God as being an end in itself, rather than creating the very mind and character of God within us, becoming Christ-like. That aspect was totally lost to them. When somebody told them they could live another way, that they didn't have to keep the law, they said, "*Fine. If I can be Christ-like any way I like, I will choose any way I like.*" That's the easy way, but it is also the way of the reprobate!

Paul told the Corinthians to examine themselves, whether they be in the faith. "*Prove your own selves. Prove your own lives.*"

Is our life being lived in harmony with God and with His law, and with the spirit of God's law? I can't determine that for any person other than myself! I've got to do that for myself. You have to do it for yourself individually.

Asking, "What fruits are evident in our lives?" can be a very useful means of coming to understand that. Are we being Christ-like? Are those same fruits being conveyed to our children? If our children are learning those same things, even at the physical level, if they can learn how to relate to other people in a right and godly way, even at a physical level, they are learning something very valuable. Passover can have a relevance to them as well.

Children can understand the aspect of judgment in terms of the Passover.

Look at the four questions the Jews ask at the Seder service:

- Why do we eat matzo instead of bread?
- Why do we eat bitter vegetables?
- Why do we dip our vegetables twice?
- Why do we recline, instead of sitting up straight?

Are those really the important things about the Passover that have to be learned by a child? Children's curiosity being what it is, they are very easily taken care of. But aren't there some greater questions that children can ask as far as the Passover is concerned? Aren't there some deeper issues that a child can learn about the Passover in terms of this world: the fact that we are living in a world that is standing in judgment, and that it has to separate itself from that world as well.

Moses recorded for us:

Exodus 13:14 And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery (bondage).

He did so by judging that house, by judging the SYSTEM that ruled that house.

You and I have to learn that same lesson in our lives, and ensure that as we approach the Passover, that we are judging our lives, that we are making sure that the system that is ruling our life now is God's system, and not the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ruled and controlled Egypt - and that still controls this world, but will shortly be removed by the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God!

Those are important lessons. Those are lessons that we can convey to our children as well, so that they understand some of the great lessons of the Passover, even though they don't come and participate in the Service.

*... Peter Nathan
16 Mar 07*

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