

Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-13—Exodus 14-19

In our last lesson we discussed the first nine plagues that God brought on Egypt because of the Pharaoh's refusal to let the children of Israel leave Egypt. Remember in Exodus 4:23 that God instructed Moses to tell the Pharaoh, **"And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn."** We are now going to see this threat carried out, but we need to focus our attention on what happens with the children of Israel as this is of even greater importance than what happens to the Pharaoh and the people of Egypt.

(Read Exodus 12:1-14) Moses and Aaron's first job now is to prepare the children of Israel for what is about to happen. There is more than just getting them ready to move out of Egypt. God is getting ready to organize them into a nation, or kingdom, in the process of their Exodus. He begins by giving them a new calendar. This is taking place in the spring, sometime in March or April by our calendar. But that month is to be the first month of their new calendar.

Moses and Aaron are to tell the people what they are to do in preparation for the plague, and their leaving Egypt. The preparation was to become a ritual that the people were to observe annually, once they left Egypt, in remembrance of this time of preparation.

Verses 3-11 detail these instructions. Note the end of verse 11, **"it is the LORD'S Passover."**

Later we will learn that this is a shadow, or a pattern for the ultimate plan of God. Jesus Christ will become the Passover Lamb when He is crucified and His blood, if we accept it, will become our sign to God that we are to be passed over from the second death. This is prophesied by the prophets, detailed in the Gospels and discussed at length in the Epistles for our understanding. Note the detailed instructions in choosing the lamb on the 10th day of the month, keeping it up until the 14th day when it is to be killed, and that no bones are to be broken. These same procedures will apply to Christ when He is crucified that we might clearly identify Him as the ultimate Passover Lamb.

Verses 12 and 13 tell us what God is going to do to all who have not followed these instructions which of course includes all of the Egyptians.

(Read Exodus 12:15-20) This details the observance that the people were to carry out annually after they have left Egypt in commemoration of this day when they are settled in their new land.

(Read Exodus 12:21-28) The plan is put into action. Moses and Aaron instruct the elders and the elders put the plan into action.

(Read Exodus 12:29-40) As God said He would do, He did. All of the firstborn in Egypt, both of man and beast, died that night except for the Israelites who had heeded Moses' instruction and put the blood of the lamb on their lintels and door posts. The people then were literally thrust out of the land by Pharaoh and the Egyptian people, but not before the Israelites had spoiled the Egyptians. The Egyptians were more than willing to give the Israelites their

jewelry of silver and gold to get them to leave and the Israelites left with considerable treasure of these valuables.

We discussed in previous lessons that the Israelites were only in Egypt proper about 210 to 215 years from the time that Jacob brought his family down into Egypt until this day that they leave following the plague of the death of the first born. The 430 years includes all the time back to when Abram was called by God to go to the land of Canaan.

(Read Exodus 12:41-51) This very special night marked the beginning of something very new to these Israelites. It certainly was a night to be commemorated in all their future generations. God adds some rules, if you will, to how that very special night is to be commemorated. Specifically, only Israelites, or those who had accepted the God of Israel and had been circumcised, could participate in this commemoration.

It is kind of hard for us today to appreciate what a tremendous undertaking this was. We were told in verse 37 that there were approximately 600,000 men. If we added the women and children, we are probably talking approximately 3,000,000 plus a mixed multitude that went with them plus all of their flocks and herds. The logistics of such an endeavor would tax any expert in logistics that we know today. While we have to appreciate the efforts of the various men involved from Moses on down, I think we can understand that only God could have pulled this off as He did.

As we look at chapter 13, we need to read verses 1 and 2 and then read verses 11-16. It is often easy to forget some important events or laws because it may be several chapters or books before we find the reason for them. Let me use this law that God is giving Israel and project it into the future as an example of what I am talking about. Here, God instructs the Israelites to sanctify, or set apart, all of the firstborn unto Him. This applied to both man and beast.

If we go to Numbers 3:15 God instructed Moses and Aaron to number all of the males of the tribe of Levi from one month old and upward. The count turned out to be 22,000 (vs. 39). Then God had them number all of the first born males in Israel from one month old and upward. Here the count was 22,273. God then, in effect, traded the first born males for all the males of the tribe of Levi. There were 273 more first born than there were Levites, so God had Moses collect five shekels for each of these 273 to redeem them from God and give the money to Aaron and his sons. The Levites then became God's bureaucrats, so to speak, or His servants who carried out the functions of government that were necessary.

Let us project ahead one more time. In the third chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus is talking to Nicodemus who was a ruler of the Jews, but who, for fear of the Jews, went to Jesus by night to try to find out who Jesus actually was. In verse 3, Jesus told him, **“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”** “Born again” has become a well used phrase that Christians use to identify themselves as Christians. While we can claim this identification as if it has already taken place, I submit that the literal second

birth is being a part of the first resurrection. In verse 6 Jesus alludes to this by describing the first birth as that of the flesh and the second as that of the Spirit. When we become Christians, it is a spiritual experience, but those in that first resurrection are actually inducted into the Spirit realm just as Jesus was when He was resurrected. He could manifest Himself as either physical, or spiritual.

As the Levites, who in effect became the first born through the trade, became God's servants to administer His government in Moses' time, these first born, through the first resurrection, will become God's servants to administer His kingdom here on the earth. Rev. 20:6 tells us, **"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."**

Going back to chapter 13, read verses 3-10. These are more rules on the keeping to the Feast of Passover when the children of Israel reached the land of Canaan. (Read Ex. 13:17-22) As we have discussed before, it was a relatively short distance from the land of Goshen to the land of Canaan. However, this would have meant that the people would have had to go through the land of the Philistines south of Canaan. Instead of taking the short way, God led them south to the Red Sea and then east across the Sinai Peninsula into Arabia. Note that God is doing the leading by way of the Pillar of a Cloud and the Pillar of Fire.

As promised, the people are taking the bones of Joseph with them.

(Read Exodus 14) God intentionally had Moses position the children of Israel so that it would appear to the Egyptians that they had the Israelites trapped with the Egyptians behind them and the Red Sea in front of them. It would appear that there was no way to escape. Sure enough, when the Pharaoh heard where they were, he took the bait and determined to pursue after the Israelites and return them to Egypt. If you look at a map of the area, you will see that for the Israelites to be on the shore of the Red Sea, they would have had to go south, the opposite direction from the land of Canaan. This is God's plan, so let's see how it works out.

A problem that I had not thought about until a few years ago, when I saw a video that I believe depicted the true route of the Israelites, not only was the water a problem, but the terrain of the bottom of the sea would be a major problem. It would be like the reverse crossing of a high mountain. To get to the bottom of the sea would mean climbing down a steep slope and then after crossing, climbing back up a steep slope. This would have been a major problem in moving a very large group of people, especially older people. It happens that there is a location, where I believe the Israelites were, that there is what is referred to as a "land bridge" across the sea. There is a fairly wide expanse under the surface of the water where the water is quite shallow, at least in comparison to the rest of the sea. At high tide the water is quite deep, but at low tide it is quite shallow with deeper water on both sides of this "land bridge." Crossing at this point would not have been a major terrain problem at all. I believe that this is where God positioned the Israelites.

The Egyptians caught up with the Israelites as they encamped here and of course, when the Israelites saw the Egyptians, they became very much afraid and cursed Moses for taking them into the wilderness to die. But Moses told them to be patient and watch what the LORD would do. At God's direction, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the winds began to push the water back from off of this "land bridge" so that there was a wall of water on each side. In the meantime, the angel of God that had been leading the people in the form of a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of a cloud by day moved from in front of the Israelites to behind them positioning itself between the two groups. This caused darkness to the Egyptians and light to the Israelites.

The Israelites then moved onto the "land bridge" and crossed the sea. When the Egyptians saw what happened they immediately pursued after the Israelites. However, God did a little mechanical work and removed the wheels from the Egyptian chariots. At the same time Moses again stretched his hand over the sea and the walls of water broke down to return the sea to its normal surface. Of course, this drowned the Egyptians and their horses. Many of the Egyptian chariots were gold plated with gold plated wheels. There is evidence of the gold wheel covers and the gold plating of the chariots under water at this location today. The wood of the chariots rotted long ago but left the gold plating. It is far too fragile to remove, but it can be seen by divers, I'm told.

This put the fear of God into the Israelites and caused them to believe God and His servant Moses.

Once the Egyptian army was destroyed, Moses and the people sang a song celebrating the destruction of the Egyptian army. Read Exodus 15:1-19 slowly and in your imagination, put yourself in the shoes of one of the Israelites who had at first thought they were facing sure death only to see a very miraculous victory over his enemy. (Read Exodus 15:20-21) Miriam, Moses' sister and the women of the Israelites join in the song.

(Read Exodus 15:23-26) Probably because of where I live, I think of wilderness as being in the mountains with lots of trees. But wilderness can also be the desert. This is the type of wilderness that the Israelites are now in as they journey across the Sinai Peninsula. Water is a scarce commodity, so when you are needing water for 3 million people, it is definitely a logistical problem that has to be reckoned with. Here, we're told that they came to Marah where there was water, but that it was too bitter to drink. They are only 3 days away from the miraculous Red Sea crossing, but as soon as they are out of water, the people began to complain and murmur against Moses. God provided another miracle by showing Moses a tree that when cut down and cast into the waters at Marah, the waters were made sweet and drinkable.

God made a statute and an ordinance for the people at this point. We will see later when we study the law that a statute is a law that it is the responsibility of the nation to keep. An ordinance is a law dealing with the worship of our God. So this is both a statute and an

ordinance in that it was a national responsibility, and it had to do with the people's association of their God. If the people would hear and keep God's commandments and statutes, He promised to protect them from the diseases that He had brought on the Egyptians.

(Read Exodus 15:27-16:1-3) Keep in mind that the Israelites have their flocks and herds with them, but they are in the desert where feed for them is very scarce and wild game and vegetation that could be eaten by man is also quite scarce. They have been gone from Egypt a month and a half by this time and the enormity of the logistics necessary to move, keep and feed this great number of people is sinking into the minds of the people. As a result, they are becoming quite fearful. Again they murmur against Moses and Aaron, saying that they had brought the whole assembly of people into the wilderness to kill them with hunger.

(Read Exodus 16:4-36) Moses points out to the people that it is God that they are actually murmuring against, and it is God that is going to provide for them. God gave Moses the rules by which He was going to feed the people. In the morning, there would be dew on the ground, but when the dew was gone up, there would be a small round thing like a coriander seed where the dew was. They were to gather approximately 1/2 gallon per person per day for five days each week and this would be their bread. If they gathered more, it would rot and become infested with worms. If they were only able to gather less than this, the amount that they would end up with was the 1/2 gallon. On the sixth day they were to gather twice as much as this would be their bread for the sixth day and the Sabbath. When they did this, it did not rot. Note that there were people who tried, due to their greed, to break all of the rules that God had given them for gathering this food. It didn't work for any of them. The people called this bread "manna" which means "what" because they did not know what it was.

In the evening, the camp would be covered with quail to provide their meat. This manner of feeding the people continued for 40 years.

Moses and Aaron were commanded by God to put an omer (approx. 1/2 gallon) of manna in a pot and keep it for generations. This they did and it eventually came to be part of the contents of the ark of the covenant, which we will study about a little later.

(Read Exodus 17:1-7) Again water became a problem and again God performed another miracle before the people to provide them with water. The people always seemed to blame Moses, instead of God, when something seemed to go bad.

(Read Exodus 17:8-16) This is the first instance of the Israelites having to fight another nation as they traveled toward the land of Canaan. (Amalek was a grandson of Esau.) Because the Amalekites attacked the Israelites, God said that He would **"utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."** This battle, however, is quite interesting. Moses, Aaron and Hur watched the battle from the top of a hill. So long as Moses held up his hands, Joshua and the Israelite army would prevail. But if Moses took down his hands, the Amalekites would prevail. So Aaron and Hur provided a stone for Moses to sit on and then they helped Moses hold up his hands until the sun went down and Joshua and his army won the

battle.

We have already talked about the huge logistical problem it would have been to move this large of a group of people. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came to visit Moses and to bring Moses' wife and two sons to him. When he saw the tremendous problem that Moses faced, he made some suggestions on organizing the people and taking a huge part of the responsibility from off Moses' shoulders. (Read Exodus 18) He suggested that Moses make rulers of tens, rulers of fifties, rulers of hundreds and rulers of thousands. If someone had a complaint, he would first go to his ruler of ten, but if he found no satisfaction at that level, he would go the ruler of fifty, etc. with Moses being the final appeal. Moses instituted this organization of government by choosing able men for each of these positions. The principle used here was implemented by our forefathers in the organization of our states and nation.

Chapter 19 is a very important chapter in our study. (Read Exodus 19:1-6) The Israelites had been traveling for 3 months and had arrived at Mt. Sinai in Arabia. They were to spend quite a bit of time here as God completed the organization of Israel into a nation. Up to this point, they were just a group of people without a real purpose, but things were to change drastically here at this mountain.

God called Moses up onto the mountain and first gave him the terms of a conditional covenant that Moses was to go to the people with. This is referred to as the "first covenant" or "old covenant" in the New Testament. The words "testament" and "covenant" are very similar in meaning, thus our Bible is divided into two testaments based on the two covenants God made with Israel, the first, a conditional covenant, made here in Exodus 19 and the second, an unconditional covenant we find first written in Jeremiah 31, but applying to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. By conditional, we mean that God promised certain things IF Israel did certain things. Let's read it. **"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."** The IF was that **"if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant."** The voice He is referring to follows in chapter 20 when He spoke the Ten Commandments to the people. All of the law then follows in the rest of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. So if the Israelites would keep His law, He then made some great promises. First they were to **"be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people."** The word "peculiar" has to do with ownership. The people would become God's and God's alone. We're told later that He is a jealous God, He was not willing to share the people with man-made gods. This position would put them above all other people. God qualifies Himself as being able to make such a promise by saying, **"for all the earth is mine."**

Second they would **"be unto me a kingdom of priests."** Priests, here means rulers. They would become a kingdom of rulers. If you recall when we were studying the promises to

Abraham, we referred to Romans 4:13 where Paul put all of the promises together to mean that Abraham and his descendents would inherit the whole world, i.e. would rule the world. This has been taken wrong by a great many people to mean that they would rule the world in the way we understand ruling today, i.e. by oppression. This is not God's plan, but ruling the world in accordance with God's way is.

The third promise is that they would be **"an holy nation."** The word holy means "set apart." I have often used the example of the military in which the officers and the enlisted men are separated from each other so far as their quarters, very often their meals, and their social activities. The military has found out that for the officers to function as "rulers," it is better to set them apart, in these areas, from the enlisted men. The same applies to a nation, or kingdom, of rulers. For them to function properly, they will be set apart from the other nations.

God has made this offer as His part of the covenant, or contract. For a conditional covenant or contract to go into effect, the other party has to ratify, or accept it as well. (Read Exodus 19:7, 8) The elders of the people, after hearing the condition and the promises put forth, said, **"All that the LORD hath spoken we will do."** So the people ratified the contract as well, which then puts it into effect.

It is very important that we understand that this covenant is dependent on man being able and willing to be in total obedience to God. As we will see, the people simply could not do this. Jesus Christ is the only person who was totally without sin. This covenant failed, as we will see, because man could not do his part. But in God's plan, this failure is part of the plan, partly so that man realizes his own failure, his own weaknesses. To understand the New Covenant, or New Testament, I believe we need to have this understanding first.

(Read Exodus 19:10-25) God gives Moses instructions to prepare the people for Him to talk directly to them. No man has seen God the Father face to face and lived. Man has seen manifestations of God, but not in all His glory. It was in all His glory that He was going to present Himself to the people, though He would be manifested to them as fire and smoke. It was necessary that the people be warned not to try to get any closer than the bounds that Moses has set up at the base of the mountain. Failure to observe these bounds would mean death to that person or animal. JRL