

Exodus 12, 13.

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Article 11 of 47 **Short Meditations**

(Cavenagh, 1866.)

At the opening of Exodus 12, we find the beginning of the year changed. It is not said why this was to be, but simply, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year unto you." This was an intimation to the people of Israel, that they were to enter on some fresh connection with God, to take up some new character before Him, or to be recognised in some new relationship; and that this was *necessary*. "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months." And this was said to them while they were still in Egypt, the place of death and judgment, the place of nature or of the flesh.

The intimation thus given at the very outset, was very quickly explained. "God is His own interpreter" — for the very next moment the congregation are introduced to the Lamb of God, whose blood was to shelter them from the sword of the angel; that is, to be their full plea and answer to the throne of judgment where righteousness sits.

This is simple and clear and blessed. Israel are at once taught this — that the new character in which they were now to walk with God was that of a blood-bought people, a redeemed, ransomed generation. This was the form which the new life, the new year, on which they were now entering, was to take. This was their new creation, their second birth. They were new creatures, being reconciled sinners.

This truth takes a New Testament form in 2 Cor. 5: 16-19. The new creature is that sinner who walks with God in the faith and sense of reconciliation. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, *who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.*" This is man beginning the new year, entering on a new life, being a new creature, as a sinner reconciled by the paschal blood of Jesus. So in 1 Peter 1: 25. He is declared to have been born again by the word which the Gospel has preached to him; and that Gospel is the message of redemption through the blood of the Lamb. By this he becomes a kind of firstfruits of God's creatures. (James 1)

The early intimation of new creaturehood which we had here in this twelfth of Exodus, is thus soon interpreted — and the interpretation is confirmed by one and another scripture in the New Testament. But there is much more than this in analogies between these chapters and New Testament Scriptures.*

*The structure of John 3 is like that of this Exodus 12. For there the Lord begins by telling of the need of being born again, or of being a new creature, but does not, till afterwards, interpret how that is to be. (See ver. 3, and then 14, 15)

At the close of chapter 12, we find Israel, now redeemed themselves, acting upon others. They are taught how to deal with "strangers." They were to tell them, that they were as welcome to come into the regions of the new creation as they had been — that they might eat of the Passover with them, or celebrate redemption with them; only they were to be circumcised as they had been. They must renounce themselves in the flesh, or in the old-creation condition, and then they may enter on the new year with them, the new life, the new-creation of God in Christ Jesus. There must be no confidence in

the flesh, but a rejoicing in Christ Jesus — this is the circumcision. (Phil. 3: 3.)

The Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament, is the leading, formal witness and depository of this evangelic ministry of the redeemed. There the saints are seen addressing themselves to "strangers," and doing so in the simple style of this Scripture — Ex. 12: 43-49. So that we are still breathing the atmosphere of the New Testament when we read these verses. We are in company with the Spirit which afterwards animates the Book of the Acts. In the reconciliation of the paschal blood, the blood of the Lamb of God, we tell all around us, that the kingdom is theirs on their being born again, on their faith in the One who died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us," we still say to "strangers," "be ye reconciled to God." (See the chapter already quoted, 2 Cor. 5: 20, 21.)

How sweet, how convincing, how precious it is, thus to find ourselves in the mind and with the principles of the New Testament, as we read these very early oracles of the Old! — But there is more of this.

The saint is to take heed to himself, as well as to.. address himself to "strangers." And to take heed to, himself, order his ways, and nourish his soul, in the peculiarities of the calling of God, and after the mind of the Spirit. This we next find in Exodus 13; and this we also find, formally and characteristically, in the Epistles of the New Testament.

In chapter 13, we see the Israelite of God, now redeemed by blood, and thus set in God's presence and fellowship, carrying himself according to this his place and calling. He finds his springs in God, his motives and sanctions, and secret effectual virtues in that which God has done for him. He purifies himself — keeping the feast of unleavened bread; he devotes and dedicates himself — rendering up his first-born and his firstling to the Lord; and if he be inquired of, why all this cleansing of himself, why all this devotedness, he simply pleads what the Lord had done for him, when he was in Egypt, a bondsman there in the place of death and judgment. This is all he has to say, though he be challenged again and again. His springs of moral life are known to rise in the salvation of God.

This is truly blessed. This says to the living God, "All my springs are in Thee." And this is the language of the new creature in Christ Jesus, as we see him in the Epistles of the New Testament. So that in this thirteenth chapter, we are still, as I have said, in New Testament atmosphere. For there it is the mercies we have received, the *promises* which have been made to us, the *grace which has brought salvation*, the fact that we are *bought with a price*, the great Gospel mystery that we are *washed from our sins*, a sprinkled, redeemed, sanctified people, which are recognised as the springs of all moral behaviour and personal devotedness — of course to have their efficacy in us by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. (See Rom. 12; 2 Cor. 7; Titus 2; 1 Cor. 6; Rom. 6)

And another remembrancer of the temper which we find in the New Testament is in verses 3, 4, of this same chapter. There, Israel is told to "remember" the day of their deliverance. This is surely, as I say, in the temper or spirit of the New Testament. So much so indeed, that the standing ordinance in the midst of the saints in this evangelic age, is a feast of remembrance. (1 Cor. 11: 23-26.) And other scriptures of the same New Testament teach us, that this remembering is to be the very business of eternity, or of the life of the redeemed in glory. (Rev. 1: 5; Rev. 5: 9)