# Audio file

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# 1979 study – 03

We continue our series of studies on God's way of salvation, and tonight I wish to examine point by point the various steps involved in the Israelites departure of Egypt. With the recognition that each of those steps is an object lesson of the similar steps we have to take in the spiritual realm, if we're going to obtain deliverance from the bondage of sin. The six steps in their order were by way of review from our last presentation,

#1 every male person had to be circumcised before he could partake of the Passover service.

The second point was that the lamb had to be chosen on the 10th day of the first month. And kept over until the 14th day of the same first month.

The Third Point was that the lamb had to be killed at the going down of the sun. The blood very carefully caught.

and the 4th point was that the blood had to be sprinkled upon the doorpost and the two side posts of the door.

The fifth point was that the lamb, after having been carefully roasted whole, had to be eaten. Around about the midnight hour

and the 6th and final point was that the first born of Egypt had to die before they could obtain their deliverance from the land of bondage.

We emphasize the fact that if anyone of those steps have been omitted, or if they'd gone to the first five and failed to make the sixth, then they would have stayed in bondage, just as much as if they had done nothing at all.

Let's come back now to examine the first of those six steps, namely circumcision, which is an extremely important one, bearing in our mind and our theme is God's way of salvation. Which way of salvation, of course, today is one of many proposed ways invented by mankind to get them to heaven. There are certain theologies which teach us we can go to heaven without being righteous. There are others which tell us we have to work our way to heaven. And so, it goes on down the line. Circumcision was first introduced into religious services or as a religious symbol, back in the days of Abraham. At least, that's the first time it's referred to in the word of God. Let's turn back to Genesis, the 17th chapter. Wherein we read the very interesting story of Abraham's final confrontation with the great issues of his life. When Faith reached out and finally laid hold upon the promises of God and the promised Son was born.

In the first verse of Genesis, Chapter 17, I read these words: “and when Abraham was 90 years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram and said unto him I am the Almighty God walk before me and be thou perfect.

And I'll make my covenant between me and thee and will multiply thee exceedingly.”

Abraham at this point was almost 100 years of age. Quite some years before, quite a number of years before he had left his native homeland called Ur, of the Chaldeans. And you read this, of course, back in the 12th chapter in the 11th and 12th chapters of the Book of Genesis. And as Paul says in Hebrews Chapter 11, he went out by faith, not knowing where he was going. but simply obeying the word of God and going where God sent him. So, without question Abraham was a man of faith to begin with. But we will notice in a few moments that his faith did not reach as far as it needed to bring him real deliverance from his problem.

As the years went by, Abraham and Sarah found themselves continuing as a childish couple. They had no children, and yet the Lord God has said to them in Genesis 12 and verse two and I will make of their great nation, and I’ll bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shall be a blessing and I will bless him that bless thee, and curse him, that curseth thee. and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

And so, God's personal promise to Abraham was he would be the father of a great nation of people, not just a small tribe but of a great nation numbering 10s, in fact hundreds of thousands of people. At one time God showed him the stars in the heavens and if you can count those and you can count your own offspring. Because they shall be as numberless as the stars up there in heaven above, and yet in apparent defiance of this promise on God's part, the years rolled by, and not even one child appeared, let alone a nation numberless as the stars in the heavens above.

Now Abraham naturally of course, became very deeply concerned about this, especially in view of the fact that he understood that the promised Messiah, the savior of the world, would be born of him eventually, and therefore it was extremely important that he have a son, who would have more sons, who in turn would finally bare, the son Jesus Christ.

And in Genesis 15, we find Abraham expressing his concern about this sad state of affairs. A promise made, but apparently no fulfillment to it. We’ll note verse one down to about verse five or six. “After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram, in a vision saying fear not Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. And Adam said Lord God, what wilt thou give me seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And Abram said, behold, to me there has given no seed or no offspring, and lo, one born in my house is mine heir.”

This is a very interesting approach, on Abram's part. one which unfortunately is very, very common to Sinful humanity. God hath personally made a promise to Abraham. And God said I will bless thee and multiply thee. God said I will do it. But as I said a moment ago, as the years went by, it appeared that God had forgotten his promise or proved himself incapable of doing what he said he would do.

So, Abraham then proposed a solution. He says, Lord, he says you've given me no children, no offspring. So I propose that to solve this problem, or in other words to fulfill the promise that you have given to me, I adopt my faithful servant Eliezer of the Damascus and let him be my heir. Note now the answer which God gave. verse 4, in Genesis chapter 15, “and behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying this shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine own heir. And he brought him forth and abroad and said, look now toward heaven. And tell the stars if thou be able to number them. And said to him, so shall thy seed be.

And he believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness.”

God never used the promise with the very specific statement that the child would be Abraham's personal flesh and blood offspring. And he would multiply exceedingly that he would outnumber, or at least be equal in number to the stars up in heaven, which of course cannot be counted. Because there's too many for the human mind to even see even today with the very best of telescopes.

Now, despite this renewed promise, time went on and still no child appeared until we come to Genesis Chapter 16. Where the word of God says: “now Sarai, Abram's wife, bear him no children. And she had a handmaiden, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, behold now the Lord hath restrained me from bearing, I pray thee go in unto my maid, and maybe thou may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai, then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar, her maid, the Egyptian, after Adam had dwelt 10 years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abraham to be his wife.”

It's very important we do not miss the direction that Abram and Sarah were taking at this particular point of time. First of all, let's look at their characters for a moment to see what fine and noble and dedicated people they really were. When Abraham and Sarah left the land of Ur of the Chaldees, they made a tremendous personal sacrifice. Because Ur at that time was the most prosperous commercial Centre in the entire world. Archaeological excavations of the area demonstrated the culture and the education in that area was the leading culture of that time, and Abraham and that great and mighty city of Ur of the Chaldees, back in the land of Babylon, were certainly assured of a very stable and secure future so far as earthly prospects are concerned.

He would have become a very wealthy man, a very powerful man, but at great personal sacrifice, He had obeyed the call of God and left all that behind to become a wandering nomad in a land, he couldn't even call his own, at that time, namely the land of Canaan. He went to a very uncertain future from what appeared to be very certain future, and therefore Abraham was an obedient man. He was a self-sacrificing man. He's a very dedicated man.

Now, without question, he was also a man of faith. because the Bible says in Hebrews Chapter 11 by Faith, Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. He was a man of faith no question about that. And he was a man of very, very good living standards, morally sound, honest, a man of integrity, a man who erected the alter sacrifice every single day. A man who is a successful missionary and winning people from surrounding tribes to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now on top of all these things, we find that Abraham loved the cause of God and the prosperity of God's cause. and the fulfillment of God's promises was the most important thing in his whole life experience. That is what he lived for, prayed for, worked for, and so forth, and it was to advance the cause of God that he and Sarah developed this plan for him to have a child by another woman, namely Sarai's handmade Hagar. In short, it was an attempt to build the Kingdom of God by earnest, sincere and dedicated people, Man's way.

By human plans and procedures to carry out the work of God in this world. And of course, it utterly and completely failed. And this is where the right of circumcision comes into the picture, as we shall shortly see in Genesis chapter 17. But first of all, let’s notice the fact, that as a result of their effort to solve God's problem and to fulfill God's promise to him, their effort to build God's Kingdom man's way, to take over God's work on his behalf, as a result of that, a son was in fact born, his name was Ishmael. And at the time he was born, as verse 16 says of Genesis, chapter 16, Abram was four score and six years old, When Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram. in modern terms, of course we say he was 86 years of age. Even for those days, which was after the flood, there was getting on, because all told, Abraham lived about 120 years. So, there were only about 34 years of life left over the total 120, when Ishmael was born.

Now, prior to the flood, of course, men lived to enormous ages, many of them very close to 1000 years. God permitted 13 years to go by without saying a single word to Abram about what he'd done. Not a word, just let him go for 13 years. And then in this in chapter 17, verse one, we read that when Abram was 90 years old and 9, or 99 years of age. The Lord appeared to Abram and said unto him I am the almighty God walk, before me and be thou perfect.

What is the inference when God says be thou perfect? What's the inference? He had not been perfect. And when we consider of course, the procedure he adopted by which to fulfill God's promise, to recognize his way had not in fact been perfect before God. Reformation was definitely required at this point of time. But this does not mean, of course, he was in an abandoned sinner. far from that.

Now as God spoke to Abraham about making the covenant with him, and he would become a great nation. Abram naturally thought that God was talking in terms of his beloved son Ishmael, because Abraham certainly loved Ishmael, because he was the only and very beautiful child of his old age. And furthermore, he loved him because he thought he was the fulfillment of God's promise, worked out by his own works.

Let's go on now to verse six and seven of Genesis chapter 17. “And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I'll make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee, and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed, after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land where thou are a stranger, or the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. And God said to Abraham, that you will keep my covenant therefore thou and thy seed after thee and their generation. This is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised, and you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.”

What is another word for token? The answer is a sign, a token or a sign. Now, for instance, today we use tokens virtually every day in the form of banknotes and coins. They're tokens, aren't they? And when you pay over a certain number of coins or notes, as the case may be, or a combination of both, that is your token that you have committed that much value, to purchase that much value in goods. and of course, we reckon that we certainly give a give over far more value than money than we do for goods received. That's the complaint today of course, and possibly I think it's a very valid complaint, at least in some respects.

We will now move on before we talk further about this token on sign and of course the word sign is short for the word signature. and circumcision therefore is the token, the sign, or the signature that man had to make to the covenant between him and God.

We'll move down that of verse 15 and we find that God makes another very specific promise to Abram and Sarai.

“And God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, they shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and give thee a son also of her. Yes, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations, Kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face and laughed and said in his heart shall a child be born unto him that is 100 years old? And shall Sarah, who is 90 years old, bare, and Abram said unto God, oh, that Ishmael might live before thee.”

Now when at the age of 99 years, and well, virtually 100 years of age by this time, and Sarah, 90 years of age, Abraham said, it’s absolutely a physical impossibility for my wife and myself to bear children at this time of life. The power is gone. We can't do it. It's impossible. And when God specifically said that Abraham himself and Sarah, his wife, would bare that child, Abraham laughed at the proposition.

Does this sound as if at this point Abraham believed in that promise? It certainly does not. Here is unbelief, here is doubt, here is a very negative response to the statement which God made at that point of time.

Now let's go back a moment to Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael. Ishmael was the product of Abraham's attempt, to carry out the work of God by his own works. He used his body to his various organs and functions to produce a child. But that child absolutely was not recognized in any sense of the word by God as being the child of promise, in no sense of the word. As we read on, we find that God stipulates the fact that with Isaac the child who would be born as the result of the application of God's power and God's ways that that child would be the one who would be a part of the covenants. Let's read now verse 19: “and God said, Sarah thy wife shall bare thee a son, indeed, and they shall call his name Isaac. And I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his seed after him. And as for Ismael, I have heard thee. Behold I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly, 12 Princess, shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.”

But, now even though Ishmael should receive considerable blessing, the Lord says: ‘but’. Don't let that blessing cloud the issue. Don't let it divert your mind the real facts of the case, he says. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bare to thee at the set time in the next year. And as it turned out, God's word was fulfilled and to a woman over 90 years of age, to a father 100 years of age, the child, the promise was born in God's own way, all within the framework of law.

What then, is the relationship between the signature or token called circumcision on the one side, and the fulfillment of the promise on the other side? What is the covenant made between God and man back at this point of time? And we relate this covenant, of course, to the departure of Egypt, which has a very specific application, and which will help us to understand this covenant better than we otherwise could.

A covenant, of course, is an agreement between two parties. In this case Abraham and God, or in short, man and God, because Abraham was a representative man and symbolized the rest of humanity. Now a Covenant is an agreement in which each party says I will do so and so, and if you will do so and so. So, God said, alright, he said, I will do certain things and for your part you must do certain things. Now Abraham and Sarah had set up a different covenant. They had said to God, all right, we still believe in you. We are still your children. We still love you and want to serve you. We're going to do your work this way, and that result God, of course, could not accept. And then God came to Abram and said to him now look Abraham, the time has come when the child Isaac, is to be born.

I'm not denying, of course, the fact that Isaac should have been born long before. It would have been, if Abraham had understood the principles correctly and they were involved in the birth of Isaac.

But before Isaac could be born, and as a result of the manifestation of God's power, Abraham had to do his part exactly as God laid it out. Exactly. And in order to clarify in Abraham's mind the part that he had to play, he had to do something by way of signing the covenant, and the signature was circumcision.

Now let's go across, for instance, to the departure of Israel from Egypt. They had to do certain things which God himself had specified, that they must do. ‘They’ had to select the lamb, ‘they’ had to kill that lamb. ‘They’ had to sprinkle that blood, they had prepared the carcass exactly as God specified and they had to wait until the first born of Egypt died. Now before there could be any positive assurance that they would escape from the land of Egypt, that God's plan would work, they had to take a stand. They had to come to a certain point, and that point was to have it settled in their minds that they would do what God said as God said to do it, and when God said to do it.

Now let’s make a quick survey of the six steps, again without listing them of course, at this time. we'll ask ourselves the question, did the Israelites carry out the word of God exactly as God gave it? And the answer is yes. They did choose the lamb on the 10th day of the first month. They did keep it the 14th day, and they did slay it on the 14th day of the first month, and they did catch the blood they did sprinkled upon the door post, as God said. They prepared the body whole without breaking any bones, and they roasted the lamb with unleavened bread. And then they stood and ate of that lamb. Good, ready to travel with their baggage in their hands and their travelling clothes on, ready to go. And they waited patiently until the first born of Egypt died.

Now, why did they do the work exactly as God said? Because it was in their mind to do it that way. Of course, they were people in a rather desperate situation. They had experienced a lifetime of bondage in the land of Egypt, and they knew perfectly well they were totally helpless to save themselves from their predicament. They knew that only God could get them out of that difficulty, solve their problem and set them on their way to the land of Canaan.

And they are so desperate for a solution that they gave up any ideas of inventing or injecting into the whole thing, their own devising or plannings. And are prepared to do the work exactly as God specified, or God stipulated in this whole situation back there in the land of Egypt.

And so, while they entered into the physical right of circumcision as a visible promise or signature on their part, to carry out the work of God, simply signing the covenant by entering the into the physical right of circumstance was not enough in itself. That outward sign had to be a statement of an inner mental attitude and the inner mental attitude wasn't there. The inner disposition wasn't there, the signature, of course, meant nothing at all, as you can read later in the Book of Romans, where Paul talks about the fact that circumcision means nothing at all if it's not circumcision of the heart. Or a genuine committal on that person's path to carry out the way of God, exactly as God said it.

Now as we move into the study of the deliverance from Egypt and the corresponding typology which deals with our own personal deliverance from land of sin, we can't over emphasize the principle that we have to get this settled in our minds that God has formed the plan of salvation.

Man cannot invent a plan of salvation. Man doesn't have that capacity.

God alone can do it. And God has done it. We must get it completely settled in our minds, that we are to study until we understand the plan of salvation exactly as God has formed it. and until we do understand what God has promised to do, and what we have to do in order to obey God and respond to his leadership, and when we understand exactly what God has determined to do, we dedicate ourselves, no matter what the cost may be to do it, God's way as he leads us on step by step. We must be determined to permit nothing to enter by way of human devising or human plans to distract us or divert us from the pathway which God has planned for us.

Now if we will make that kind of dedication, then spiritually we're entering into the circumcision experience. We are placing our signature on the covenant. Just bear in mind, of course, that the covenant or the signature on the covenant and even the covenant itself is not deliverance.

When for instance, you go down to a market to buy a new car. The salesman comes out after you've agreed with him to pay a certain price, and to receive so much for your trade-in. He comes out and writes down all these agreed facts upon a piece of paper. And then says, now sign it.

Now is that piece of paper the Car. No, it's not. It's the agreement for you to buy the car. And on his part to sell the car for a stated price. And once he signs that covenant or contract and you sign that contract, then what must he do? He must sell the car for the agreed price. And what must you do? You must pay the agreed price and then you receive the car.

Clearly, very clearly, of course, the signing of the covenant is not the receiving of the car. It only prepares or opens the way for the receiving of the car, and so likewise circumcision is not the blessing itself. Circumcision is not Isaac, for instance, circumcision is our dedication or our signature that we will do the part exactly as God has stipulated, and no other way but that.

And very obviously, of course, early in this series of studies it’s very important, that we recognize this principle and make a very solemn dedication in our hearts to do it God's way, because that's the only way which works anyway. All other inventions, of course, like Ishmael will leave those who follow them, lead them on to total and final destruction.

Our time is gone for this presentation, so we’ll leave it there and in the next series we will continue to examine the remaining five steps in the series on the deliverance from the land of Egypt.