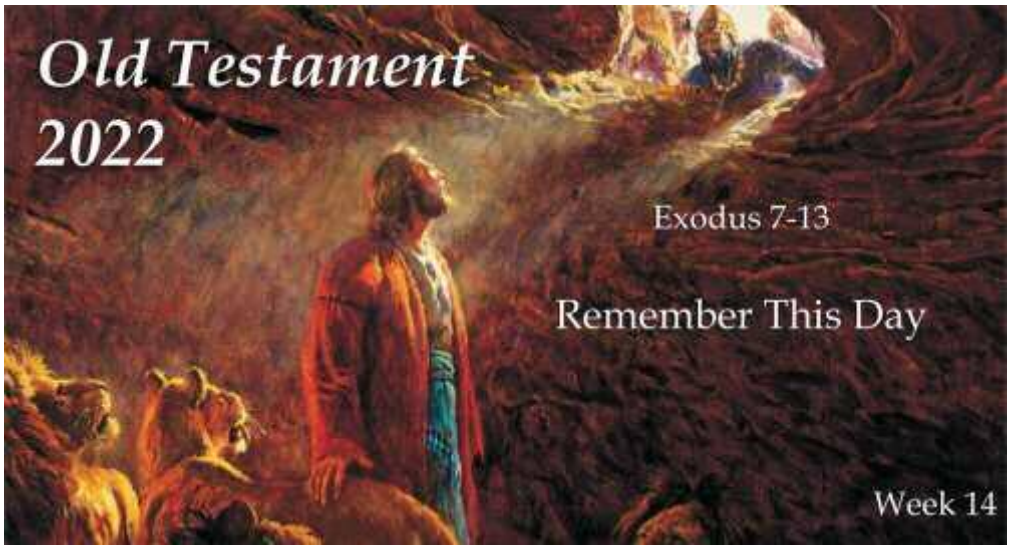

Week 14 is scheduled for study March 28-April 3, 2022. We use Pharaoh as an example of one who refuses to accept Christ. But are we that much different? How can we be better at embracing Christ and what he represents?

Day 1

As you read and ponder Exodus 7-13, record the impressions that come to you. As you do this regularly, your ability to recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost will grow.

Exodus 7-11 - I can choose to soften my heart.

What about Pharaoh?

If you believe in the infallibility of the Bible, as a translated document, you have some impossible explaining to do. God has always honored our individual agency. Never has He forced anyone to do anything against their will, for He never imposes His own will on anyone. To do so would make Him unable to be an impartial judge come judgment day. One of the great blessings of the latter days and the revelations that have come through the prophets show up in explanations of the scriptures for which we had no answers to our questions. One of these instances is the hardening of Pharaoh's heart over and over again when Moses tried to get him to let the Israelites leave Egypt.

Everything about Pharaoh's behavior makes sense now that we know from the prophets that he hardened his own heart. The Lord just warned Moses each time he was sent in to talk to Pharaoh what Pharaoh's reaction to the news would be. It wasn't until the 10th plague that the Lord finally said to Moses that after this plague Pharaoh will let the people go.

What about me?

Just like Pharaoh, the Lord knows the decisions each of us will make, but He never interferes with our decisions in a way that would negate or interfere with His future need to be our judge. The final choice must be ours alone, so that we alone are responsible for what follows.

Up for debate?

Did Pharaoh have a choice to either believe or to harden himself (his heart) against the demands of God given to him through His prophet? Do we have a choice to have a "soft" heart verses a "hard" heart? Is it really that easy as just making a decision?

While making the decision to have either a soft or hard heart is easy to talk about, what goes into making that decision is all fueled by emotion, pride, humility, desires, and so much more. When we are presented with a commandment (let's use the law of tithing for this example), we are faced with our past experiences in life and how they affect our view of today's circumstances. We may have had people ask us for money "in the name of the Lord" and then they spent it on themselves. That could sour one's perspective on contributing to a religious institution. Often it is the case that when someone pays their tithing for the first time they are exercising a great deal of faith. They have allocated that money for other things in the past, and to give it to the Lord of a new faith is quite the sacrifice for them. This is a choice they make. Choosing to pay the tithing is choosing to soften our heart and choose to be believing. Refusing to pay our tithing is to harden our heart and to refuse to believe that either God requires it or that those who receive the money are really God's servants. This is a simplified view of this concept, but I hope you see my point.

We choose each day whether our life will be guided by belief and obedience or cynicism and unbelief. Pharaoh's life was apparently led by an enormous ego and a lot of

mistrust/distrust in others. He only gave in when he was literally the last in the nation to hold out against the Hebrew's God. Even his own advisors said in Exodus 10:7

> 7 And Pharaoh’s servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?

Another word for destroyed here is "ruined." First they had hail, mixed with fire. What little was left after that the locust devoured. There was no living plant left in all of Egypt, except in Goshen where the Hebrews were. Even when his whole nation was destitute, Pharaoh was still trying to call the shots with Moses to prove he was in charge and not bowing to the wish of hated slaves. He tried over and over again to impose conditions on their worship of their God. It wasn't until the last plague that he finally conceded that he was beaten and let the people go. But as we will soon see, even then his pride got the better of him and he once again tried to go back on his word to the people, and it cost him dearly in the Red Sea.

Pattern much?

Do you see the pattern here? Those who harden their hearts against the will of God suffer. This is a universal truth, and one which never varies. People may get away with doing their own will for a time, but the will of God always prevails. Always.

Those who choose to soften their heart and obey are blessed in all the ways of happiness that God has to bless us. Believing in God and His commandments is to accept the laws of happiness and live within them. This is why those who choose to soften their hearts towards the Lord are they who qualify for His choicest blessings, both in this life and in the eternities. The whole point of this life is the prove to Him that we will obey Him in all things (Abraham 3:25). We need to remember that it is the nature of God's lifestyle that makes Him the happiest person in the universe. We cannot expect to disobey His laws that bring happiness and expect to find happiness in some other way. It can't happen. God wants us to be happy. This is why He gives us commandments and tells us we need to do things in a particular way. He is defining the road to long-term happiness for us. Only those who choose the softer heart can travel that road.

Day 2

As you read and ponder Exodus 7-13, record the impressions that come to you. As you do this regularly, your ability to recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost will grow.

Exodus 12:1-42 - The Passover symbolizes Jesus Christ's Atonement.

All of Egypt suffered the effects of the first three plagues of waters of blood, frogs and lice. But when the third plague came, from that time forth the Lord separated His people from those in the rest of Egypt. The land of Goshen was not affected by any of the remaining plagues, right up through the ninth plague, the three days of darkness. The tenth plague was universal in its application. Those who did not follow the Lord's specific instructions for that night would lose their first born of anything living within their home or property. All their animals had previously been killed by one of the first plagues, so those to die in this last one were animals they just recently purchased to replace those that had died earlier.

I discussed in an earlier lesson how many of these events in the life of Moses mirror the life of the Christ who was to come. The spiritual events of Christ's life were played out physically in the life of Moses and the Israelites. The focus for today's lesson is on this last plague. Have you noticed the degree of specificity with which the Lord gave directions for the family of Israel to follow? Here are just some of the specific instructions God gave Moses for the Israelites to live by in the coming generations.

Their current month was to become the first month of their calendar year, so that their year started with the celebration of the Passover feast.

Their sacrificial meal could be a lamb or a goat, but had to meet the qualifications He gave them to be used.

There was to be as little waste as possible, so families could combine if there weren't enough in the family to completely consume the animal that night.

Everyone was to kill the sacrificial animal the same night then take its blood and mark their door posts and the lintel (the cross beam on the top of the door) with the fresh blood. The blood on the door posts represented the blood of Christ that is the symbol of

what saves us from spiritual death. For the children of Israel, it was the sign to the destroying angel(s) that this house was obedient to Jehovah (Christ), and they were to pass over their house to one not so marked with the "blood of the lamb." Powerful imagery. Oh, and no one was to leave the house. If they did, and the destroying angel saw them outside the house, they would be 'outside the covenant' and would be destroyed. So once the sun set that day, no one left the house, not even to go back to their own home if they were eating with someone else.

They were to roast the meat with all edible parts. The animal was to be eaten with unleavened bread (symbolizing their haste in leaving Egypt - they didn't have time to raise their bread) and bitter herbs (symbolizing the bitterness of their bondage in Egypt). Anyone caught eating anything with leaven in it during the seven days of the feast week would be cut off from Israel, meaning they would be considered no longer a member of the family of Israel or the nation.

The whole animal was to be consumed that night, and anything not consumed was to be put into the fire to be completely burned. Like Christ's personal sacrifice as our sacrificial lamb, nothing was held back, he gave his all to perform his redeeming sacrifice for us.

All who ate the meal were to be dressed and have their traveling gear in hand (staves, for example), and the meal was to eaten in haste to remind them that the would need to leave at a moment's notice.

I don't know if they were able while still in Egypt to fulfill all of the instructions from the Lord, because their feast was to last a week, with the actual passover meal being held on the last day of the week. While in Egypt I highly doubt Pharaoh would have permitted them to leave their work building his public works to worship their God. But once they were out of Egypt, they would be able to fulfill all of the requirements given to them by Jehovah.

The sacrament

As I sat through the sacrament on Sunday, I pondered how the Passover given to Moses and the sacrament given to Christ's Church are alike. Sometimes it is difficult to see past the physical observances to see how the spiritual observances have replaced them. Here are three things that came to my mind.

The blood of the lamb, whether on the door posts or the blood of the Lamb on Calvary makes no difference. Either way we are to look to Christ's sacrificial blood for our salvation. For the Hebrews that blood was salvation from a physical death. For us it is eternal death or eternal salvation and life everlasting through the blood of our redeemer, Jesus Christ.

The Passover meal had to be consumed in one sitting. There could not be any leftovers. I think this is part of the reason why nothing could be sodden or boiled. If you boil it you generally make soup for the next day out of the leftover pieces. This sacrifice was final, once and for all, and immediate. It was a total consuming of the flesh of the one being sacrificed. And that applies to the lamb or goat, as well as to Christ. He gave his all, nothing held is reserve. I think this is why the sacrament is represented by the symbols of his body and his blood, for he gave all of himself for our redemption.

No one was to leave the house that night or they would be killed. Anyone found outside of the safety of the marked houses would be considered as one outside of the covenant between God and His people, and therefore subject to the punishments he was inflicting on the nation of Egypt. That punishment was death. The covenant of baptism is renewed each week by our partaking of the sacrament. This is how we help keep ourselves inside the protection of the covenants we made at baptism. We receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and can always have His Spirit to be with us if we remember Christ throughout the week. The sacrament is our spiritual protection today just as the blood on their doors, and staying inside when told to do so protected ancient Israel.

There you have three ways the Passover has symbolism found in the modern sacrament service. What else can you add to this list?

Day 3

As you read and ponder Exodus 7-13, record the impressions that come to you. As you do this regularly, your ability to recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost will grow.

Exodus 12:14-17, 24-27; 13:1-16 - The sacrament helps me remember my deliverance through Jesus Christ.

I don't know about you, but I often lose sight of just how privileged I am to belong to God's earthly kingdom. Only a very small number of people ever even hear of Christ's gospel during mortality. To be a covenant making, and covenant keeping member of Christ's Church during my time in mortality brings with it both tremendous blessings and great responsibilities. Most of humanity will have to wait until the gospel is preached to them after mortality is over. So they won't have the privilege of participating personally in all the covenant making process, because someone in mortality will have to do it by proxy for them.

Christ has called a prophet to be his spokesman to the world. He has given the prophet priesthood keys and powers that are meant to lead us to eternal exaltation in the kingdom of God. This exaltation is the whole point and purpose of our coming to earth in the first place. Those who will be happy with a lesser degree of glory in the eternities need no covenants, for covenants are only for those who desire exaltation and eternal glory in the Celestial kingdom. Christ opened those doors of opportunity for us through his suffering to bring about the great atoning sacrifice. He culminated his work by resurrecting himself and bringing to pass the resurrection of all of God's children who come to mortality.

None of what any of us hold dear, or are hopeful of in the eternities, is possible without Christ and his sacrifices on our behalf. Through his prophet, Jesus showed Moses how to save his people from physical bondage. He gave them freedom and the opportunities to grow as individuals and as a nation. It is also through Jesus that each of us can be freed from the effects of our sins. Because he has given us a way to repent of our sins, and offers us not just forgiveness, but grace to help us become better than we currently are, we can progress now to become more like Christ in very real and tangible ways. This pleases God, our Father, and opens the doors for our being able to receive all that the Father has to offer His children once the plan of salvation has finished its course.

Christ has taught us that in the end our Father will glorify His son and give him all that He has. In return, Christ will turn to those who were obedient to his commandments, who repented of their sins, lived lives of holiness, and will share with them all that he has received from the Father. This is what opens the door to exaltation and godhood for the obedient. We will be able to live among the Gods and be one with them forever. This is what Christ means to all of us.

FHE/Personal Study

Exodus 12:1-42 - The power of traditions

In the Bible we call them traditions. Some today would call them rituals. Either way, having something that you repeat over and over again, for whatever reason you do it can have some very beneficial effects. The verses in today's material detail the first rehearsal of the plans the Lord laid out for conducting the feast of the Passover. It takes a week to go through the whole process, with the main meal being eaten on the seventh day of the week.

The Lord understands better than we do the power of habit. By teaching the people to do certain things on certain days, and to do them in prescribed ways, they live better lives than if they were allowed to do whatever came into their heads that morning. The things the Lord wanted them to do had specific lessons attached to them, but the people were all too human, and quickly forgot the purpose behind the rituals. They performed the rituals more because it was their way of life, what set them apart from all the nations around them. Those rituals became part of their identity. That in and of itself is not a bad thing.

When we do things on a regular basis, but also regularly practice reminding ourselves why we do what we do then rituals can become a power for change in our life. For example, if I adopt the habit of reading the scriptures each day, I can soon become inured or immune to the power of the scriptures. They can just become words on a page that I neither heed nor learn from. But if I make the effort to periodically work at stating (for my own benefit) the reason for my reading the scriptures each day then I am able to see where my practice of this ritual or tradition may have grown stale and needs to be revitalized.

The difficulty with living the higher law of the gospel, is that we have to self monitor to make sure we are still making progress and doing what we do each day to become more like Christ. We can't rely on the habits of our daily living to fulfill the requirements of the laws by which we live. The Israelites could take their offering to the priest and the priest would perform the sacrifice of the animal's life. This sacrifice could represent both the life of the individual or the life of the Christ that was to come. It was up to

them to remind themselves of which it was, and how that sacrifice could be made on a more personal level.

We don't have the luxury of being able to fulfill the law by handing an animal over to a priest to be sacrificed. We must offer our self as the sacrifice. All that we do each day is part of that sacrifice. Are we always looking for ways to see the needs of others and to help in any way we can? Do we search the scriptures for meaning and directions or just read them and put them away for another day? At least we are reading them, and that is a step in the right direction, though not a saving step.

Habits, rituals, or traditions of good, of any kind, help us be better people. We are in charge of what habits or customs we adopt, how devoted we are to them, and of monitoring our progress and remembering why we adopted them in the first place. Yes, there is power in ritual. The sacrament, our Sunday meetings, Family Home Evening, scripture study, personal and family prayer, are all rituals or customs that both set us apart from the world, but also provide for us opportunities to daily evaluate our lives in our efforts to become more Christlike.

Click the link below to

print a PDF copy of the article.

OT14-2022 - Remember This Day

Week 14