

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



July 31, 2011

No Distinction

The Passover story is a wonderful example of God's care for His favored people. But a deeper lesson is often overlooked by those who have benefited from it.

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Ex. 12:12-13).

The Passover story is the defining event in the history of the Jewish people. Prior to this event, the Israelites were the property of others. But at the Passover, they were separated out by God as His own special people and given their freedom. From that day until now, the Passover feast has been the high holy day among the Jews, commemorating their deliverance from Egypt and the beginning of their nation.

The original Passover story reveals a key fact that is worth a closer study. Notice that the destruction of the firstborn was upon *all* in the land of Egypt—none were exempt. The Israelites were spared only because they painted the

blood of the lamb over their door posts. If they failed to take that divine precaution, they would suffer the same fate as their Egyptian neighbors.

In other words, as far as God's judgment was concerned, there was no distinction between Hebrew and heathen. *Both* were under the condemnation of death. Only by God's grace did any firstborn survive that night of slaughter.

In later generations, the Jews forgot that aspect of the story, and missed its implications in their own time. By Jesus' day, their identity as the people of God had turned into a condescending attitude that saw themselves as superior to all others. Even as they celebrated God's deliverance of His people in their annual Passover feasts, they failed to remember the most fundamental lesson in the story, that ultimately, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; *all* stand condemned before God.

The failure to recognize this parity with the Gentiles was the biggest stumbling block to the Jews receiving the gospel message in the first century. The Jews were often willing to give the

gospel a grudging hearing, until mention was made of that same message being offered to the Gentiles; then they exploded (see, for example, Ac. 22:21-22). In Paul's systematic overview of the gospel system in the epistle to the Romans, he spent the first three chapters arguing that the Jews even *needed* the gospel. “Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin” (3:9). It was a lesson taught in their own Passover observance, but conveniently overlooked and steadfastly resisted. It proved to be their downfall.

Like the Jews of old, Christians have been delivered from God's judgment by the blood of the Lamb and set apart as God's own special people. We can rejoice in that honor, but we must not make the mistake of forgetting the real story here. We are sinners saved by grace, not super-saints who can look down our haughty noses at the unwashed masses around us. Our salvation is an act of undeserved mercy, and we must accept that gift with profound humility, not smug self-righteousness.

– David King