

Is it your NEW YEAR?

The ushering in of a New Year is a welcome event to most people.. Lest they miss the excitement of the transition of the old into new, many people keep awake through the night of the last day of the last month. The celebration wanes off by the end of the day and one discovers that nothing has become new except the calendar that has replaced the old. Old problems and previous sorrows linger on. The oppressive employer, the nagging neighbor the disharmony at home, the uncertainties of the future are still there. What newness can be brought in just by a good meal, good dress and the sound of crackers that rend the air? It is another vanity that vanishes thin into the air.

The walls may receive anew paint but the brick and the mortar inside remain the same. With the fears and sorrows still locked in the heart, what newness can come just by wearing something brand new?

The history of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt thirty-four centuries ago was just that. Sighing and sorrow, poverty and slavery were their lot under Pharaoh and his taskmasters. Months and years rolled by. The tyranny of Pharaoh would not lessen nor the tears of their tormented souls cease. What joy, what newness could there be to a soul in slavery and sorrow? The universal disease called SIN has done just that to the whole world. Sin appears a pleasure to begin with, but slowly it turns into a power. The monsters of lust, greed, selfishness, deception and envy, rule and ruin the hearts of people. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (or slave) of sin", the Lord Jesus said (John 8:34). Sin brings the wages of eternal death (Rom.6: 23). Sin brings guilt and guilt brings unrest. Fear and frustration cause people to go to the extreme act of committing suicide.

Hebrew slaves cried in desperation. Their tormentors were too strong for them. God in heaven saw their plight and sent a savior in the person of Moses. God did this to deliver a small community of people. Later God sent a global Saviour in the Person of Jesus of Bethlehem. No human is concerned or capable enough of solving the sorrows of men. The Scripture says, "...he saw that there was no man...therefore his own arm brought salvation" (Isa.59: 16). In the Person of Jesus on the cross, God stretched out His arm of sympathy and salvation.

Deliverance to the Hebrew slaves came not by signs and wonders that Moses performed. Victory came through the blood of the slain Passover lamb. This incident is recorded for us in Exodus 12 and this is one of the "cross" chapters in the Old Testament. "...we have redemption", Eph.1 :7tells us "through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace". Salvation is in Christ. He is our Passover Lamb. Salvation is offered free for the recipient but for the Donor, it did cost Him His all. Deliverance demanded the blood of Jesus.

Salvation is conditional. Though Christ is the potential Saviour of all, He is the practical Saviour of only those who repent and believe on Him. He is "the Saviour of all men", Paul tells us, "specially of those that believe" (1 Tim.4:10). The belief or faith envisaged here is a special kind of faith. It is not merely intellectual -a mental grasp and acceptance of objective, historical truths. It is a faith that comes with repentance. Repentance that is Biblical involves two things. Firstly, there is a turning away from sin in godly sorrow and secondly, there is a turning to and a yielding to

God and His will. Biblical faith is always a sequel to Biblical repentance. The Hebrew slave who applied the blood of the slain lamb was spared and the one who did not, perished. The slaying of the lamb alone did not bring salvation but the applying of its blood did. God did not save the Hebrew slaves because they deserved it. God does not save anybody because he or she deserves it. Salvation is always by 'grace'. Salvation is God's unmerited favor to undeserving sinners.

The work of redemption -the slaying of the lamb and the application of its blood -brought a new start to the life of a Hebrew slave. The years that had gone before were left uncounted and unvalued. Divine dating begins with salvation. "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Exo.12:2). God values only Redemption years and not calendar years.

Have you begun with God? January firsts may come and go. They have no real and lasting significance. In the life of the Hebrew slave, redemption through the blood marked a new beginning.

Such a beginning is characterized by four aspects. Firstly, it was a beginning of their liberty from all bondage. God in His mercy freed the slaves. Secondly, it marked the beginning of their separation. Salvation must be followed by separation. Thirdly, it was the beginning of God's continual provision. It was a marvel that God fed two to three million people in the wilderness by raining manna from heaven. Fourthly, it marked the beginning of revelations regarding Himself, His Law and His Sanctuary.

God desires to initiate such a fourfold beginning in your life and mine. Christ was made sin for us on the cross (2 Cor.5: 21), only to initiate such a new year in our lives. Have you begun with Christ NEW YEAR?