

## The Gospel Explained in terms of a Donkey

- 1) About 40 days after Jesus was born His parents brought him to Jerusalem (Lk. 2:22).
  - i) During this time Mary and Joseph offered a *sacrifice* on the Lord's behalf (Lk. 2:24).
  - ii) Jesus' parents chose to offer either 2 turtle doves or 2 pigeons.
- 2) The doves or pigeons offered by Mary and Joseph were part of their obligation under the OT law,
- 3) But this was not all they were obligated to offer on behalf of their Son.
- 4) Two weeks ago we studied the word "firstborn."
  - i) We noted how God said the "firstborn" belonged to Him.
  - ii) The "firstborn children" among the Jews (and this seems to just describe males) belonged to Him.
  - iii) God also said firstborn animals (and I understand as these as males) belonged to Him.
- 5) When parents had a firstborn male child, they had to "buy Him back" from God.
- 6) God's "buyback process" has been compared to about 5 months wages for an average family in ancient times.
- 7) This process helped remind the Hebrews of how God had kept the Hebrew firstborn alive in Egypt.
- 8) Luke did not mention this "buyback process" in Lk. 2, but Mary and Joseph also had this obligation.
- 9) Buying back a "firstborn male son" helps set the stage for some information in Ex. 13.
  - i) In Ex. 13:2 we find Moses telling the Hebrew people the "firstborn belonged to God."
  - ii) This fact is also stated in verse 12 of this chapter.
- 10) God's people were being prepared for a future in Canaan and Moses said this in Ex. 13:11-13 – **READ**
- 11) Verse 12 tells us the "firstborn" among animals (males) belonged to God.
- 12) This is simple to understand, but how were the Hebrews to give these animals to God?
- 13) The answer to this question is found in another place, Num. 18:17.
- 14) This additional Old Testament reference says:
  - 15) *"But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savor unto Jehovah."*
- 16) The "firstborn animals" which belonged to God (Ex. 13:12) were to be killed and sacrificed to God.
- 17) This is also easy to understand, but this information comes with an asterisk – there is an EXCEPTION!
- 18) The exception to killing and offering up firstborn male animals is found in Ex. 13.
- 19) God said a ***firstborn donkey*** was not to be sacrificed.
  - i) We may remember how in the Old Testament there is a division for animals.
  - ii) Some animals were called "clean" and others were known as "unclean."
  - iii) Even before Moses Noah was told about "clean" and "unclean" animals (Gen. 7:2).
- 20) It seems God divided animals into 2 categories ("clean" and "unclean") for at least 2 reasons.
  - i) From a physical standpoint, some of the meats could have posed health hazards based on ancient practices.
  - ii) From a spiritual standpoint, "clean" and "unclean" began to help people see a distinction.
  - iii) "Clean" and "unclean" animals introduced the idea that some items would be "sacred" (set apart, distinct).

- 21) Donkeys were animals which fell into the “unclean” category and this made them unsuitable for sacrifice.
- 22) Donkeys were classified as “unclean,” but they were very important creatures.
- 23) The Israelites used donkeys as pack animals.
- 24) Every donkey was important, and God said He owned the firstborn male donkeys.
- 25) If donkeys had been categorized like sheep, the firstborn donkeys could have been sacrificed to God.
- 26) Donkeys were not suitable for sacrifice, so what should be done with firstborn donkeys?
- 27) Since firstborn donkeys be set free to go where they willed since they “belonged to God”?
- 28) **God said “no.”** The firstborn donkeys had to be dealt with one one of two ways (Ex. 13:13).
  - i) Donkeys could be “redeemed” by the Hebrews (bought back from God) by offering a lamb.
  - ii) If the person who owned the donkey did not want to “buy it back from God,” the donkey needed to be killed.
  - iii) God said a donkey’s neck needed to be broken.

IF YOU ARE BEGINNING TO WONDER WHY ATTENTION IS BEING GIVEN TO FIRSTBORN DONKEYS AND THE HEBREWS EITHER BUYING THEM BACK FROM GOD OR BREAKING THEIR NECKS, STAY WITH ME FOR ABOUT ONE MORE MINUTE TO SEE ONE OF THE GREAT, GREAT POINTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

- i) The “*first born donkey*” in Ex. 13:13 represents someone – these donkeys stand for you and men (mankind).
- ii) God said there were just 2 choices with firstborn donkeys: *Redeem them or kill them.*
- 2) Notice how Ex. 13:13 mentions donkeys right alongside *people* (first born sons).
- 3) In Ex. 13:13 God describes the problem of sin by using donkeys.
- 4) We all know that sin leads to spiritual death (“the wages of sin is death,” Rom. 6:23).
- 5) When a person becomes guilty of sin one of two things must be done –
- 6) Either a sinner must be “redeemed” or he will “die” in sin and perish eternally.
- 7) These two options are the exact same 2 choices here in Ex. 13:13 with firstborn donkeys.
- 8) God would not accept a firstborn donkey as a sacrifice, just as God will not accept unredeemed man.
- 9) If what is being put forth seems to be a little hard to accept, let’s dig into this a little more deeply.
- 10) Firstborn animals belonged to God and were to be sacrificed (Num. 18:17); they could not be redeemed.
- 11) Donkeys were treated differently; they also belonged to God, but they could not be sacrificed to Him.
- 12) Why didn’t God give the Hebrews the option of just letting firstborn donkeys go free?
- 13) The answer to this question is found in the symbolism being conveyed.
  - i) If these creatures represent man, the image would mean God will let sinful man also go free.
  - ii) Stated another way, just letting firstborn donkeys go would mean God just overlooks man’s sins.
- 14) Many believe that God will do this very thing; God is so nice sin does not matter to Him all that much.
- 15) God is so loving He pretty much overlooks sin unless we are the worst of the worst.
- 16) Firstborn donkeys in Ex. 13:13 tell us God cannot and will not overlook sin. ...
- 17) There were only two options when it came to God’s ownership of firstborn donkeys.

- 18) One option was to break the necks of these animals.
- 19) Donkeys belonged to God and if they were not redeemed, every single one of them had to be killed.
- 20) This very same true applies to people guilty of sin:
- 21) If we are not “redeemed” (bought back) we must die. We will perish in sin and be forever separated from God.
- 22) Firstborn donkeys warn us about the spiritual consequences of sin.
- 23) If we die and we are not in a right relationship with God, there can be no hope.
- 24) There can be no grace from God which will allow us to be forgiven after we leave this life.
  
- 25) If a 1<sup>st</sup> born donkeys tell us sin cannot be overlooked and snapping its neck is unsettling, what choice was left?
- 26) Ex. 13:13 says firstborn donkeys could be “bought back.” Firstborn donkeys could be “*redeemed*.”
  
- 27) Here is one of the most important points of the night:
- 28) What was the redemption price for a firstborn donkey? REPEAT – Ex. 13:13?
  
- 29) God said a “*lamb*” was the redemption price.
  - i) Out of all the animals God could have picked to redeem a first born donkey, He picked a lamb.
  - ii) God could have said, “Use a lamb or another of these additional clean animals.”
  - iii) God said, “use a lamb” and this is the final word on this point. Only a lamb could redeem these donkeys.
  
- 30) By now a picture might be forming our minds and Ex. 13:13 might seem a little more interesting.
  
- 31) The “lamb” and “only the lamb” could be used (Ex. 13:13) because this foreshadowed “another lamb.”
  - i) In the ASV the word “lamb” is used 32 times in the New Testament.
  - ii) All but four of these “lamb verses” are found in the book of Revelation.
  - iii) The book of Revelation centers on “the lamb” (Jesus Christ).
  
- 32) Jesus came into the world as a lamb. He died as a lamb. His lamb like sacrifices continues and continues.
- 33) In Ex. 13:13 we have an animal that lives and an animal that dies.
- 34) If a lamb died, a firstborn donkey was allowed to live.
- 35) Without a lamb’s death, a firstborn donkey had to have its neck broken and thus died.
  - i) The brief details in Ex. 13:13 are a brief summary of the gospel.
  - ii) Jesus the lamb (Jn. 1:29) and He died so we might “live.”
  - iii) If we are not willing to have the Lord pay for our redemption, **we must die in sin.**
  
- 36) When we look at the breaking of the neck for firstborn donkeys, this was temporary measure.
- 37) Having a neck broken (man or animal) was surely painful.
- 38) What was temporal for animals will be eternal for the unsaved.
  
- 39) As we look at Ex. 13:13 we find a very powerful teaching regarding salvation.
- 40) We also get God’s view of who we are.
  - i) Men and women often think they are so strong and so smart.
  - ii) We live in a time of great advancements.
  
- 41) We send people into space and below great bodies of water.
- 42) We have created fantastic tools in fields such as medicine and science.
- 43) Communication is beyond incredible compared to even what we possessed 100 years ago.
- 44) We can look at humanity and think we are so far advanced, it is almost like we are “gods.”

- 45) Ex. 13:13 is a good reminder of who we are.
- 46) God took an unclean animal (donkeys) and put man right alongside this creature.
- 47) God had no problem putting humanity on the same line as a donkey.
- 48) We may think we are “hot stuff,” but sin brings us so low we need divine intervention.
- 49) We need redemption, and this is something we cannot provide on our own.
  
- 50) With a substitution (Jesus’ death), we are absolutely hopeless before God.
- 51) We sing hymns with words like, “Jesus is all the world to me.”
- 52) When these hymns are sung, we need to take the words very seriously because they are absolutely right.
- 53) Without Christ each and every person guilty of sin would have zero hope of heaven.
  
- 54) If we have committed even one sin, we are like a firstborn donkey.
- 55) The only question is: Will we be redeemed by the lamb, or be unredeemed and suffer spiritual death?
- 56) The choice is ours, and let’s not fail to make the right choice.