

## The Passover Meal of Fellowship

*“Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8)*

Israel, in being redeemed from Egypt and given a promised inheritance, typified the believers who are “delivered ... from the power of darkness”, to become “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12,13). But the parallel goes further. In order to mark their deliverance from bondage into liberty, the Children of Israel were to partake of a sacrificial meal of fellowship together, the Passover feast which formed a yearly “memorial” (Ex 12:14) of their redemption. Even so today, the believers unite in fellowship in partaking of a memorial “feast” (cp Jude 12), of bread and wine; emblems which speak of the greater sacrifice, “Christ our Passover”, who “is sacrificed for us”. And as we shall see, the spiritual principles Israel were taught through the Mosaic feast are carried over to our memorial – hence Paul’s exhortation to “keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8).

The record of Exodus recounts the original institution of the Passover, immediately prior to Israel’s departure from the land of sin and bondage. But before giving any of the details of the feast itself, the keeping of the Passover was linked to a new beginning. “Yahweh spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Ex 12:2). This point is most significant, – even the calendar was changed, as far as worship was concerned, to mark this new beginning. For Israel, as Yahweh’s Firstborn (Ex 4:22), it was to be a new existence as a separate people in their own right, as “a nation from the midst of another nation” (Deut 4:34). They were given a new national identity, and a new system of worship which would teach them the principles of Redemption to be later seen in the promised seed of Abraham (Gal 3:24). Even so, believers today, in being baptised into the Lord Jesus experience a new beginning – a “newness of life”, (Rom 6:4) as they in spirit, depart from the world of iniquity, receiving a new identity as being a brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, this same principle is shown in the Lord himself – he is “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18), and all who embrace the principles of His Sacrifice, who desire to representatively eat his flesh and drink his blood (Jno 6:53-58), become part of the New Creation currently being formed in him.

That the Passover was indeed a meal of fellowship is made clear from the first ordinance made concerning it: “In the tenth day of the month, they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house. And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating ...” (Ex 12:3). So it was that there were Divine restrictions placed upon the distribution of the lamb. There was to be one lamb per house – no more than that. One Passover lamb was to be sufficient for all their requirements, no matter how large the household might have been. Even so it is with us. As the House of God (1Tim 3:15), the Ecclesia has been provided with the greater Passover Lamb to feed upon in fellowship; the Lord Jesus – a single sacrifice, sufficient for all our needs. But in the event of their being insufficient numbers to consume the lamb, another household – only one other – could also join with the first, the one to whom the lamb belonged, that together they might partake of it together, in fellowship and in hope of deliverance. And likewise, in the antitype, there was insufficient for the Purpose of God amongst the Jewish household, to whom the Lamb of God came. There were too few in number who accepted the invitation to partake of the “great supper” provided for them (Luke 14:16-20) for them. There was “yet room” (v 22), and so the Gentiles were invited to come in, and sup with them (v 21-24) also. So it is, that both families, both Jew and Gentile are brought together in Christ, that both might partake of the benefits of His Sacrifice in a common fellowship, and a common hope.

The families of Israel were to feed upon the lamb. That is, they were to take it into themselves, and digest it, being strengthened by the nourishment it gave. And this in itself taught them how they were to absorb the spiritual principles the Passover taught them into their being, that they might be strengthened by them to give Glory to their God. Speaking of another matter, the Lord Jesus said: “my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (Jno 6:55,56). So it is that there is a symbolic “eating” and “drinking”. To eat and drink the flesh and the blood of the Son of Man, is to partake of the spiritual nourishment which comes from him. It is to consume the delights of the “word made flesh” – to inwardly digest the testimony of the Word concerning Him. Even so, to truly partake of the Passover lamb, for the faithful Israelite, was to digest the spiritual points it’s various ordinances were designed to teach. And as we shall see, this not only looked forward to the Perfect offering of the Lord Jesus, but also taught the believers principles to be absorbed into their lives also.

### ***THE PASSOVER LAMB AND IT’S PREPARATION***

The Passover lamb had to be physically perfect. “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year ...” (Ex 12:5). But whilst this clearly pointed forward to the Perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus (cp 1Pet 1:19), in digesting this principles Israel were being taught how they themselves should stand in the sight of God. Truly it is that the body of believers ought to become “without blemish”, themselves, for the Lord Jesus “gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27). Not that we can be considered “without blemish” through our own works; but rather that through faith in our Lord Jesus, our sins can be washed away, that by faith and forgiveness, we become regarded as sinless in the sight of God. This is the ideal to which we strive to attain, to overcome the flesh, to cleanse our way (Ps 119:9) by taking heed to the Word of God, that being so cleansed we might be presented “faultless” (Jude 1:24) before the throne of Glory.

The next ordinance regarding the Passover reflected a tremendous irony. “Ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening” (Ex 12:6). Under the Sacrificial code, the slaying of the animal by the offerer was a means of identification with the death of that animal (cp Lev 1:4,5). By so identifying himself with that Sacrifice, the offerer was proclaiming himself to be worthy only of death, yet also recognising that he could find a hope of Salvation, ultimately in the perfect Sacrifice of the Lord’s providing. So it was, that in the case of the Passover, the “whole assembly of the congregation” (possibly the firstborn on the behalf of each house?) were to kill the animal, in identification with it’s death – and therefore with the hope of redemption it provided. But the terrible irony lay in the fact that in the Antitypical Passover, even the Lord Christ, it was the whole congregation present that demanded their Saviour to be crucified – they killed the Son of the Most High God, and “desired a murderer” to be released to them (Acts 3:14,15). Yet the typical lessons are clear – we must be identified with the death of the Antitypical Lamb to partake of the benefits of his Sacrifice. He died for us, that we might be receive deliverance and forgiveness.

This point is further emphasised in the actions carried out with the blood. “They shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses wherein they shall eat it” (Ex 12:7). Literally, poured out blood is a testimony to the fact of death – the animal had died to provide such an extent of blood. Symbolically, or representatively, therefore, the blood speaks of the death of the True Passover, which believers memorialise in their weekly “feast”. In order to pass into the house of salvation, the Israelites had to pass through the blood – it being above, and either side of them, and were to remain their until morning (Ex 12:22). That is, in type, they had to pass through the Sacrificial death into life – into the refuge of the Lord’s providing. And even so it is in the case of the believer. “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised

up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:3). Our entry into “the house of God, which is the ecclesia of the living God” (1Tim 3:15) begins with our passing into the death of Christ, our Passover, through the watery grave of Baptism. And as we emerge from those waters, to a newness of life, we begin a new course – we have a new identity, so to speak, now being part of the Family of Christ, and an heir according to the promise. In Baptism, we pass through the blood of Christ, into the House of Salvation, awaiting the time of deliverance, when we might be called out in the morning, at the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

Considering more particularly the actual parts which were eaten, again we are presented with many wonderful points for our learning. The food had to be prepared in a particular way – it had to be roasted: “they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire ... eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof” (Ex 12:9). Notice this; the animal could not be boiled – it had to be roasted with fire.

Fire in Scripture, stands as a figure of trial, or a period of testing. So it is, that in speaking of the believer’s faith, Peter spoke of “the trial of your faith, being more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire ...” (1Pet 1:7), And again, he gave the exhortation to “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1Pet 4:12,13). Fire then, speaks of trial – particularly trials which come upon the righteous who, in experiencing these things are partaking of the sufferings of Christ. The Passover Lamb then, taught that the Sacrifice would be bathed in fire – that is, surrounded by the sufferings and tribulations which our Lord experienced, for “though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb 5:8). And in partaking of these things; the thoughtful Israelite was taught the principle of how in order to partake of the benefits of the Greater Passover, he might also need to partake of the fiery trial of Christ’s sufferings – we cannot partake of the sacrifice without also partaking of the fiery roastings.

### *ACCOMPANIMENTS TO THE FEAST*

Again, in connection with this, the sweetness of the Passover Lamb could not be eaten without partaking also of bitter herbs: “and with bitter herbs they shall eat it” (Ex 12:8). Here, the Hebrew word rendered “bitter herbs,” is used in only one other context; that is, in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, speaking of the intense anguish Jeremiah felt at the fall of Jerusalem and the things he endured: “I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood” (Lam 3:15). The bitter herbs then, speak of the bitter afflictions tasted by those who seek to remain faithful in times of adversity – those such as Jeremiah, who experienced the fire of affliction, yet who were to come forth as purged gold; better refined for the Master’s use. There are more bitter herbs to be tasted in some cases than in others; but we may be assured that they are there – we cannot partake of the Passover without them, even as we cannot enter the Kingdom without “much tribulation” (Acts 14:22). True wisdom is to recognise the reality of the situation, and trust that the Lord who places the bitter herbs before us will also deliver us that we come forth refined.

Also accompanying the Passover meal was unleavened bread: “they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it” (Ex 12:8). What then, does the unleavened bread signify? If the Sacrifice ultimately represents Christ- what is it that accompanies his Sacrifice? Is it not the presentation of the believers? This is the Inspired testimony of Paul: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1Cor 5:7,8). The unleavened bread then, speaks of the believers themselves – how they ought to be a new,

unleavened “lump”, having cast away the “leaven of malice and wickedness” out of their house. We keep the feast, that is, our memorial meal of fellowship, not with malice and wickedness; but in memory of what has been done for us in the offering up of “Christ our Passover”. And so, we keep the feast “in sincerity and truth”, casting out that which doth offend, that the whole lump may be pure, even as Christ our Lord is pure.

Interestingly, this expression “in sincerity and truth” is only used on one other occasion in Scripture – and that in the context of speaking about Israel’s departure from Egypt. In Joshua 24, we have the last words of Joshua to Israel before his death – his final appeal: “now therefore fear Yahweh, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye Yahweh” (Josh 24:14). Upon their departure from Egypt, as we have seen, Israel ought to have made a new beginning, casting away the things of the flesh, to worship their Great Redeemer. And in partaking of the unleavened bread at their Passover meal, they were taught this principle, how that at that time, they should have cast away the gods they worshipped in Egypt. Yet they did not, hence Joshua’s final plea to do just that before his death. But this is the principle behind the Apostle’s exhortation to Christ’s ecclesia; in keeping the feast, we must remove from our midst every vestige of the world, and its idolatrous ways, that we might representatively partake of the Sacrifice “in sincerity and truth”.

### ***LET NOTHING REMAIN UNTIL THE MORNING***

The final ordinance is most illuminating as to our general approach to Divine Things in the darkness of our sojourning. Israel were commanded, “ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is Yahweh’s Passover” (Ex 12:11). Although the people had received the promise of a time of deliverance, when they would be led into their Kingdom, they did not know the hour of their departure. Hence, they were to eat the feast in readiness for immediate departure, with their shoes on, and their loins girded; prepared to leave at an instant. And even so it is with us. We are under apostolic command to have our “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15), and to “gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1Pet 1:13). We await the time of our Lord’s appearance, that we might be led out from this benighted world, to the dawning of a New Age of Righteousness and Peace. But we know not the time of our deliverance, not “the day nor the hour”. So it is that we must be ready always, continually being mentally prepared to depart at any time, to be with our Lord.

But as with Israel, the time to partake of the sacrificial principles of Redemption is now. There is no value in leaving anything till the morning, for then it will be too late. When the day breaks, and the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2) arises to illuminate the earth with a knowledge of God’s Glory, the time of preparation will be over; and all things brought to the light, that it might be tried before his judgement throne. Let us, therefore give diligent heed to the principles of the Passover, that we might be found holy, and without blemish before that throne of glory, having endured temptation, yet having absorbed the principles of our Lord’s sacrifice into our being. And in that day, we pray, that we might be found waiting faithfully for our Lord, that as Israel of old, we might be led out of the darkness and bondage of sin into “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21).

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